

BREATH *of the* HILLS

CORNELIA BOYDEN PIERCE



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BREATH OF THE HILLS

TALES OF COUNTRY LIFE

By

CORNELIA BOYDEN PIERCE

From the breath of the hills,
And the new mown hay,
The up turned sod, and the blue bird's lay,
The Father hath fashioned, with wisdom sure,
The souls that are strong,
And brave, and pure.

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TO MY MOTHER.

*Whose memory has ever been my
Inspiration and my guide,
This book is lovingly dedicated.*

WHAT IS SUCCESS?

Come tell us, ye who've won success, thy goal;
And if within thy weary time-stained soul,
Thou feelest such pure joy at thy fair gain,
That pays for all thy struggles, fears and pain;
If having reached the height of thy fond hope,
Thou canst forget the rocks along the slope,
Or smooth the scars of battle from thy brow,
Or hold erect the head that time doth bow?

What is success? The thing that men call fame,
The world's applause, and clamor o'er a name?
The hoard of riches gained through years of strife,
The stately honors of a great man's life?
To rule, perchance, this fair and noble land,
To wear a crown, a scepter in one's hand,
To sway the people with thy slightest word,
While over land and sea thy voice is heard?

Is this thy goal? That fair and beauteous shore
Men call success? And dost thou feel no more
That weary yearning for some greater good,
Which till thou gained thy height none understood?
Do not thine eyes still see that distant star,
Whose 'luring gleam yet beckons thee afar?
Till all that thou hast gained seems poor indeed;
For with thy great power comes greater need.

Oh, man! Though riches, honor, fame be thine,
Thou art but human, and the power divine
Dost make thy pride, thy knowledge seem but small,
Before the silent mystery of Death's cold pall.
And if thy page in life's great history be
But filled with noble deeds, from blemish free,
If one true heart prays God thy name to bless,
Then thou hast reached the haven of success.

KETURAH'S GUMPTION.

"If it wa'n't for Keturah's gumption, the whole Perkins family would 'a' been in the poor house long ago," said Mrs. Jonah Sawin, tying an extra knot in the needleful of cotton yarn she had just drawn through the comfortable she was tacking.

"Why, how you talk!" exclaimed Mrs. Brown, pricking her finger in her surprise. "I allus supposed the Penkineses to be about as forehanded as any one'round these parts."

"Humph!" answered her neighbor with a toss of her head, "they do manage to make quite a show out er nothin'; but as I said before, it's all owin' to Keturah's gumption. My place jines on to theirn an' I aint lived neighbor to 'em for nigh on to twenty years 'thout knowin' putty nigh how they push along. It's 'bout five years now since Mis' Perkins died, an' 'Bijah took to his bed with rheumatis' in his jints, all that winter. That youngest gal, Ruth, was about as shiftless a piece as nature often makes, an' that boy o' theirn wa'n't much better, so the brunt o' everythin' jest fell on to Keturah. Poor gal, she showed a' mazin' sight o' grit that fust year, an' put her shoulder to the wheel with a vengeance. She was jest twenty that spring, but a woman o' forty couldn't 'a' showed more sense an' forthought in the way she managed things."

"Do tell what she did so wonderful?" said Mrs. Brown hitching her chair a bit nearer and leaning forward eagerly.

"Wonderful! why it was all wonderful, to see the way she give up bein' a school-marm when her whole heart had been sot on't from the time she was knee high to a grasshopper, an' took to raisin' chickens an' makin' butter an' doin' farm work generally. Not a word o' complaint did she make, but jest worked as hard as ever she could to keep the family comfortable; an' grew peaked an' sharp-nosed lookin' every day. But

la! no one seemed to notice it but me, for Bijah was so took up with his rheumatis', an' those two youngsters, John an' Ruth, was too lazy and selfish to care 'bout anythin' but their own comfort."

"Why, Mis' Sawin, there aint two puttier lookin' creeters in town than John an' Ruth Perkins," spoke up Mrs. Brown with some spirit, "an' to hear 'em sing in meetin' on a Sunday, sounds like as if 't was the angels."

Mrs. Sawin glanced sharply at her companion. "Well, I didn't say but what the children had improved some as they've grown older, but that's all Keturah's doin'. She's jest pushed 'em along an' made 'em what they never 'd 'a' been 'thout her. As for singing like the angels, I never was so fortunate as to hear an angel sing, so I'm no jedge o' that; an' daisies and goldenrod are putty to look at, but they aint no 'arthly use as I know on."

Mrs. Brown made no answer to this, and the two women sewed in silence a few moments.

"Seems to me the Perkins family put on considerable style for folks as poor as you say they be," spoke up Mrs. Brown, at last. "They 've had the house painted this fall, an' a new bay window put on; an' they 've got an organ for I 've hearn it lots o' times, a passin' by the house."

"I didn't say they was so dreadful poor now," answered Mrs. Sawin a little sharply, "I only said what I 'll say ag'in, that it's been Keturah's gumption that's kept things from goin' to rack an' ruin."

"When Mis' Perkins died, 'Bijah jest seemed to collapse an' grow more shiftless every day; but after a while seein' how smart an' willin' Keturah took hold, he got sorter 'shamed o' bein' so lazy, an' so took to lookin' after things a little better. Every summer Keturah has kept a lot o' summer boarders, an' done most all the work herself, an' that 's where the money's come from to paint the house an' make that new window. An' she 's earned the money to pay for Ruth's lessons on that organ, too, so she can get to play in church sometime."

"Dear me, you don't say," said Mrs. Brown. "Well, it's a

pity Keturah aint more to look at, for with all her gumption she don't run so much to good looks as the rest on 'em."

Mrs. Sawin straightened up, and her eyes flashed.

"There be folks who can only see beauty in a face like a china doll; an' there be others who look beyond pink cheeks and yeller hair, an' the soul that looks out o' Keturah's eyes is beauty enough for any face. Talk 'bout angels singin'! If there be sich things as angels, it's my opinion they look like Keturah Perkins."

"La! Mis' Sawin, how tetchy you be 'bout that gal. You must think a sight on her to talk 'bout her the way you do," said Mrs. Brown, looking at her neighbor curiously.

Mrs. Sawin's sharp eyes grew moist and her voice softened, as she answered:

"I aint no children of my own, Mis' Brown, and I've watched Keturah grow up from a baby, an' I do set a sight by her, it's a fact. I've been a-running in an' out o' there in a neighborly way ever since her mother died, an' Keturah sort o' depends on me at preservin' time. But la! her preserves beat mine all to nothin', so I aint much use after all," she added, loyally.

"I'm sure, Mis' Sawin, it 's mighty good on ye to take sich an interest in the poor, motherless creeters, an' no doubt ye 'll get yere reward hereafter," said Mrs. Brown, piously.

"I aint lookin' for no reward," answered Mrs. Sawin. "I gets as much comfort a-runnin' in to see 'em as any good I can do 'em. But, there, I guess this comfortable is about done, Mis' Brown, an' I must be a-gettin' home," added she, rising.

"I 'm 'mazin' thankful to ye, Mis' Sawin, for helpin me with this comfortable," said Mrs. Brown, bustling about and helping her guest put on her things, "an' when ye turn ye sheets don't forget to let me know, an' I 'll sew an atternoon for you, jest to get square."

"Thank ye, Mis' Brown, but I 'm a-gettin the double width sheetin' nowadays, so I don't have to turn 'em."

"Sho! ye don't say! Aint it considerable more costly?"

"Well, jest a little, maybe, but it saves a sight o' work, an'

my eyes aint so good at sewin' over an' over as they used to be," said Mrs. Sawin, opening the door.

As the two women stood in the doorway, a horse and sleigh swept past with a merry jingle of bells. The single occupant of the sleigh lifted his hat politely as he passed the house, and was soon out of sight on the smooth country road.

"Dreadful polite young feller, Dr. Andrews," said Mrs. Brown, craning her neck to peer up the road. "I wonder if he aint a-goin' to the Perkins's, he's headed that way. Ye aint heard as any on 'em are sick, have ye?"

"Not unless it 's Bijah's rheumatis' that's pesterin' of him considerable this winter."

"Maybe the Doctor 's makin' up to one o' the gals; they are both on 'em old enough to get married, an' Ruth's putty enough to be a minister's wife, or a doctor's, either," laughed Mrs. Brown.

Mrs. Sawin closed her lips tightly and made no answer, but nodding a good-bye to her friend, walked swiftly along the snowy road.

"Ruth, indeed!" she muttered to herself, as she tramped along, "I jest wish the men had more sense; but there aint one on 'em but 'll run atter a putty face, brains or no brains. An' smart, capable gals like Keturah are left to be old maids an' wear out their lives a-takin' care o' other folks' children. Well, sich is life, an' the poor calculation o' men folks," and the good woman shook the snow from her shoes, as she paused before her own door with the air of one who resigns all further responsibility as to that poor misguided creature called man.

The Perkins farmhouse stood on a high elevation of land surrounded by many broad acres. A thick grove of pine and spruce in the background made the house, with its fresh coat of paint, a conspicuous object from the road below.

The shining window-panes reflected the last rays of the setting sun, while the gleam of the burning logs in the old-fashioned fireplace shone out in the gathering gloom of that brief winter's day.

Young Dr. Andrews drove up to the door with a feeling of pleasant anticipation. It was not a professional call he was about to make, and for the time being all disagreeable thoughts of the ills that flesh is heir to had passed from his mind. A bright vision of pink cheeks, blue eyes and fluffy curls, and the memory of Ruth Perkins's sweet voice, filled his thoughts to the exclusion of all else. A newcomer in the small country town, he had, in a year's time, by his skill and devotion to his profession, together with a pleasing personality, won the hearty good-will of the people. A pretty cottage house had recently sprung up on one of the principal streets in the village, and much of the Doctor's spare time was spent in superintending its completion. The tongues of the gossips had wagged for some time, as to who was to be the mistress of the young physician's home; but thus far, Philip Andrews had kept his own council.

To tell the truth, he had but very recently come to any decision in his own mind; for having thoroughly enjoyed his bachelor's freedom, it was only upon his thirty-fifth birthday, that he awoke to the fact that it was not well for man to dwell alone always. Heart-whole and fancy free, he looked about among the village beauties with an impartial eye, but alas! not one had the power to awaken more than a brief interest. Somewhat surprised at his own coldness, he had decided to let fate settle the problem for him, when Ruth Perkins's pretty face and sweet singing suddenly aroused a warmth in his heart he had not known before. A few visits at the pleasant farmhouse where Ruth had entertained him in a sweet childish fashion, had sung for him her prettiest songs and cast coquettish glances out of her blue eyes, completed the conquest, and Philip Andrews was really in love at last. Yes, the little god Cupid had pierced the cold armor of his bachelor's heart, and life began to look quite rosy-hued to the usually grave young Doctor.

A sleighride to an adjoining town, to be followed by a supper and a dance, was the occasion of much excitement among the young people of the village. With Ruth for his companion,

Dr. Andrews anticipated the event with much pleasure, while the thought that on this occasion a certain question should be asked and answered gave to it a decided importance.

The day and the hour had come, and as Philip sprang from his sleigh and up the steps of the farmhouse, the door was thrown open and Ruth stepped quickly out to meet him. Lifting her into the cosy sleigh he wrapped the robes about her with tender care, then stepping in beside her he turned his horse's head and they were soon speeding along the smooth road.

From the window, Keturah watched her sister and her lover drive away. Yes, he must be her lover, she thought, though she knew no word had yet been spoken between them. A feeling of utter loneliness swept over her, and crouching down she leaned her head against the cold window-pane, and in the dim twilight of that shadowy room gave herself up to gloomy reflections. It was not often that the brave-hearted girl yielded to such emotions, but human nature is not always strong, nor can the heart forever crush down its natural longings. Silently the tears rolled down her cheeks, though she knew not why she wept, nor why the sound of the receding bells fell upon her tired spirit with such an icy chill.

Suddenly a door opened and a voice called out in the darkness,

"Keturah Perkins, be you there?"

"Yes, Mrs. Sawin, come in," answered Keturah, in a smothered voice.

"For the land sakes what be you a-doin' a-sittin' in the dark all alone?" cried Mrs. Sawin, groping her way into the dim room. "Where's Ruth?" she added, peering about.

"Gone to the sleigh ride with Dr. Andrews," answered Keturah.

"Humph!" said Mrs. Sawin, pulling off her shawl and dropping into a chair, "why didn't you go, too?"

"'Nobody asked me to, said she,'" quoted Keturah, with a little laugh that ended in a sob.

Kind-hearted Mrs. Sawin bent forward and drew the girl up into her motherly arms, and Keturah hid her face against that broad shoulder, silently.

“What a goose I am,” she said at last, springing up, “I’ve been sitting so long in the dark it has given me a fit of the blues. Do let me get a light.”

Mrs. Sawin’s keen eyes searched Keturah’s face, and read, with tender insight the warfare that was going on in the girl’s soul.

“So Doctor Andrews is makin’ up to Ruth, is he?” she said bluntly, determined to know the truth at all cost. “They aint engaged, be they?”

“No—not—not yet,” answered Keturah, moving about the room and avoiding the elder woman’s eyes.

“Think it looks that way, don’t ye?”

“Yes, I think so,” answered poor Keturah, growing white.

“Well, there ’s no accountin’ for tastes,” said Mrs. Sawin bluntly, rising to go, “but then Ruth ’s a putty enough gal, only she’s too young to think o’ gettin’ married.”

“Ruth ’s nineteen,” said Keturah, lighting her guest to the door.

“An’ Dr. Andrews is thirty-five,” said Mrs. Sawin, stepping into the night. “Well, that don’t make no difference, I s’pose, if they are sot on each other.”

“No, age doesn’t make any difference in such matters,” answered Keturah, wearily, and closing the door she went back to her lonely thoughts in the empty room.

Meanwhile Philip and Ruth were gliding swiftly along the frosty road. The Doctor’s usually calm pulse was throbbing with emotions wholly new, while Ruth’s foolish little heart beat fast with exultation over her conquest. An early moon had risen and was flooding the earth with its silvery light, and millions of brilliant stars twinkled merrily in the blue sky overhead. Surely it was a night made for love and lovers, thought Philip, and tender words trembled on his lips; yet with the doubt and humility of a true lover, he repressed them for the time, fearing to mar the perfect bliss of the present. Joyously

the dancing bells made the sweetest music as they sped along, when suddenly they clashed and crashed with a loud discord, as the horse plunged violently, startled by some object by the roadside. Quickly quieting the frightened animal, Philip sprang to the ground.

It was the insensible form of a woman, with a little child clasped in her cold arms, that was lying in the snow, and instantly Philip was a changed man.

"Ruth," said he, as he hastily examined the apparently lifeless form, "I must take this poor woman to a place of shelter. She has almost perished with cold and exhaustion."

Ruth glanced at the narrow seat of the sleigh, and with a childish pout said pettishly:

"How can you? There isn't room."

"Jump out, Ruth, quick, and help me," cried the Doctor, heedless of her words, and, impelled by his stronger will, she obeyed. Placing the sleeping infant in her reluctant arms, Philip lifted the woman in to the sleigh, wrapping the robes about the cold form, then stepping in beside her he held out his hand for the child.

"Give me the baby, Ruth, and wait here till I come for you. There is a house half a mile further on, and I'll take the poor creature there, and be back for you as quick as I can."

A fierce, ungovernable rage took possession of Ruth's childish soul.

"Do you mean, Dr. Andrews, that you are going to leave me here, alone, on this lonely road?" she cried.

"I am sorry, Ruth, but I see no other way," answered he, a little sternly. "I do not think there is any danger for you, and I'll not be gone but a very few moments."

Ruth drew up her small figure and threw back her head defiantly.

"If you do, Doctor Andrews, I'll never speak to you again as long as I live," she said passionately.

Without a word, Philip drove swiftly away, and Ruth stood trembling with fear and rage, alone on that moonlit road. Strangely enough, no feeling of pity for the unfortunate

woman and her helpless babe had touched her heart. Her bitter disappointment, at the unlooked-for interruption of what was to have been her hour of triumph, seemed to have crowded all else from her mind. Suddenly the sound of sleigh-bells made her shrink back with a new terror, till on a nearer approach she recognized a familiar form.

“Charlie? oh, Charlie Ruggles!” she cried. “Stop! It’s me, Ruth Perkins.”

With a loud “Whoa!” to his horse, and a muttered exclamation of surprise, the young man sprang from his sleigh and stood beside her.

“What has happened? Why are you here, alone, Ruth, at this time of night?” he cried, throwing his arm about the trembling girl, who, in her relief at the sight of a friend, was clinging to his arm and sobbing violently.

“Doctor Andrews left me here,” sobbed Ruth. “We were going to the sleigh ride, when we saw a woman lying in the snow, and he made me get out, and told me to wait while he carried the woman to the next house. And I—I was afraid.”

“He’s a brute,” said Charlie, tightening his clasp of the girl’s slim waist, “and you shall not wait here another moment. Come, let me take you to the sleigh ride, and leave Dr. Andrews to take care of his sick folks; that’s his business,” and with an inward chuckle at the thought of cutting out the Doctor, Charlie lifted Ruth in his strong young arms and placed her in his sleigh. A secret feeling of satisfaction in thinking of the Doctor’s alarm and discomfiture, on finding her gone, made Ruth dry her tears, and yield herself to the young fellow’s pleading. So, in less time than it takes to tell it, they were speeding along in the moonlight, and the bells danced as merry a tune as if fate had not just changed the current of two lives.

A few moments later, Dr. Andrews was back at the spot where he left Ruth, and drawing in his horse, he scanned each side of the lonely road with eager eyes.

His heart sank with sudden alarm, as he failed to see the slim form he had left but a short time before, and his voice trembled as he spoke her name.

“Ruth! Ruth! Where are you?”

“She ’s gone off with another feller,” called out a boyish voice from the top of the stone wall opposite, and dropping down from his perch, a farmer’s boy stood grinning at the Doctor from the side of the road.

“How do you know?” asked Philip, smothering his pride in his anxiety.

“‘Cos I seen her,” answered the boy, still grinning maliciously. “An’ I hearn her say as how Dr. Andrews left her here, an’ then the feller he put his arm ’round her an’ said Dr. Andrews is a brute. Say, be you he?”

The Doctor turned his horse’s head and drove away without a word, while the boy shouted after him with mocking laughter:

“Got the mitten, didn’t ye? Ha! ha! ho! ho!”

All through the long hours of that night Philip Andrews ministered to the wants of the female tramp he had picked up from the wayside, and when, in the dim light of the early morning he drove back to his office in the village, he had the satisfaction of knowing that, for good or ill, he had saved a human life. In spite of this, however, his reflections were none of the pleasantest as he reviewed the events of the last twenty-four hours, and a stinging feeling of contempt for his own folly swept over him as he muttered to himself:

“And I had almost asked that girl to be my wife.”

The wheels of time rolled onward, with the usual course of human events. The Doctor’s pretty cottage house was completed, but the Doctor dwelt there in single blessedness. Pretty Ruth Perkins had married Charlie Ruggles, and gone West to live, and Philip Andrews smiled calmly at this ending of Ruth’s moonlight escapade. He realized now that his own fancy for childish Ruth had no solid foundation, and he had fully decided that, as regards his own case, marriage was a failure.

Thus matters stood, when one cold winter’s day, Mrs. Sawin walked into Doctor Andrew’s office with such an agitated look on her face that Philip exclaimed in some concern:

“Well, Mrs. Sawin, what is it?”

“I’m dreadful ’fraid that Keturah Perkins is a goin’ into a decline,” burst out the good woman as she dropped into a chair.

“What makes you think so, Mrs. Sawin?” asked the Doctor, smiling at her excitement.

“Cos she ’s a growin’ more an’ more peaked-lookin’ every day, an’ coughs dreadful, an’ she don’t eat enough to keep a cat alive. You see, Doctor, all the gumption of the whole Perkins family was jest crowded into that poor gal’s little body, an’ it ’s jest made her drive along with all the hard work in the house an’ out o’ the house, till she ’s nigh about used up. Her poor mother died in quick consumption jest from overwork, an’ I do declare for ’t, Doctor, it’ a more than I can bear to set by and see that poor gal a-goin’ the same way,” and the woman’s eyes were full of tears as she spoke.

“But what can I do about it?” asked the Doctor. “Miss Perkins hasn’t consulted me professionally, and, of course, I couldn’t prescribe for her otherwise.”

“That ’s jest it, Doctor,” said Mrs. Sawin eagerly. Keturah ’s ’mazin sot about not seein’ a doctor. Says there aint nothin’ the matter, but I know better. Now ye couldn’t jest manage to drop in there sort o’friendly like for a call, an’ see for yer self, could ye?” and she searched the Doctor’s face earnestly as she spoke.

Philip looked thoughtful a moment as he considered the woman’s words. To tell the truth, the farmhouse on the hill was rather a sore spot in his memory, and not once since that eventful night a year ago, had he crossed its threshold. However, if it was in his power to help any one in trouble or sickness, he would not let personal likes, or dislikes, hold him back. Yet his voice sounded a little reluctant as he answered slowly:

“Why, certainly, I can do that, Mrs. Sawin, with pleasure, and you don’t think Miss Perkins would be displeased to see me?”

“I know she’d be real glad to, Doctor, for she do get dread-

ful lonesome since Ruth went away," said Mrs. Sawin, rising to go. As she stood by the Doctor's table a moment, her fingers touched a late magazine and her eyes grew wistful as she added hesitatingly: "Keturah 's 'mazin' fond o' reading'. I jest wonder if she 's seen this ere magazine."

"I'll carry it to her when I call," said the Doctor eagerly seizing this excuse for a visit to the farmhouse.

"That 'll be dreadful good on ye, Doctor, an' I jest hope ye'll give Keturah somethin' that 'll help that cough o' hern."

"I 'll do my best, Mrs. Sawin," said the Doctor as he opened the door for her.

The good woman trudged slowly across the snowy fields to her own house with a satisfied look on her shrewd face.

"I 'spose I be a meddlin' old fool," she muttered, "but I jest couldn't help it. But now I 'll leave the rest on 't to the Lord and Doctor Andrews."

Keturah Perkins sat by the open fire of logs in the low old-fashioned room, and gazed thoughtfully at the dancing flames. The shadows of an early twilight were darkening its corners, and creeping stealthily toward the lonely figure by the fire. Outside a blustering wind was whirling the light snow in little pats against the windowpane, that sounded to Keturah like the tapping of ghostly fingers.

Morbid fancies had come to dwell with the girl of late, and her usual cheerfulness had forsaken her. With Ruth's marriage and home-leaving Keturah's courage seemed to wane, and in spite of struggles to regain the force and ambition that carried her so bravely through many trials, the loneliness of the old house oppressed her like a nightmare.

Into the midst of these musings walked Dr. Andrews, and Keturah, surprised and startled at his sudden appearance, held out her hand in a glad welcome. The nervous tremor in the girl's fingers caused Philip to hold them longer in his own firm clasp than was absolutely necessary. With a swift rush of crimson to her white cheeks and a sweet, questioning look in the gray eyes lifted to his, Keturah's face bloomed with a

new beauty, and with a quickening of his own pulse, Philip Andrews wondered that he ever thought the girl plain.

Ah, well! what does it matter how it all came about. That Dr. Andrews's pleasant call at the farmhouse on the hill was but the first of many, goes without telling. That Keturah Perkins utterly refused to go into a decline, in spite of good Mrs. Sawin's prophecy, is another foregone conclusion, and that Dr. Andrews once more changed his views on the marriage question, and made Keturah Perkins the mistress of his home.

"I declare for 't, Mrs. Sawin," exclaimed Mrs. Brown to her neighbor shortly after the Doctor's marriage, "if Keturah Perkins aint grown to look real handsom' since she got married."

"She allus did look handsom' to me," answered Mrs. Sawin with spirit, "an' what's better 'n good looks, she 's got some gumption, too."

SLEEP.

Oh sleep! Thou fickle phantom thing;
Come to my couch, and round me fling
Thy soothing arms. Touch thou mine eyes
With thy soft lips; do not despise
My prayers, but let me woo thee now.
Ah! listen while I make my vow
To serve thee, and, with all my heart,
Obey, if thou wilt not depart.
Alas! wilt thou not bring me peace,
And cause my weary head to cease
Its throbbing? Fold thy shadowy wings,
And, ere the early sunlight flings
Its rays to light this world, so fair,
Smooth from my brow these lines of care.

FIDELIA'S VALENTINE.

The room looked bare and cheerless by the dim light of the candle that stood up on the old-fashioned bureau. Fidelia Thompson shivered, as she bent over the open drawer. Her slim figure in its clinging dress of faded cassimere had a ghostly look in the darkness, and the flickering candle seemed to point mockingly to the silver threads that gleamed amid her dark tresses. Slowly her trembling fingers drew from the farthest corner of the drawer a small wooden box. Closing the drawer, she dropped into a chair, and lifting the cover of the box, spread its contents in her lap. From a folded bit of paper she took a faded rosebud and a five-leaf clover, and gazing thoughtfully at them a moment, carefully replaced them in the box. A small silver ring, which she tried in vain to push over her enlarged finger-joint, she laid beside the paper, then lifting a faded miniature she looked long and earnestly at the pictured face.

A little sigh escaped her as the laughing eyes and smiling lips of the boyish face looked into her own, and softly she placed it beside the others. A long envelope, yellow and time-stained, lay in the bottom of the box, and Fidelia's fingers quivered as she drew from it a folded sheet of paper. It was a valentine, old-fashioned and quaint, with its picture of two hearts pierced with Cupid's arrow, and a few written verses beneath. Passionate devotion and undying love were expressed in the crude lines, that to Fidelia's tender eyes, seemed perfect in their construction. At the bottom of the page was the date—twenty years back.

Poor Fidelia! for twenty long years her one romance had been but a dream of the past; yet each year, as the fourteenth of February drew near, it became a dream of intense vividness.

With the rounding out of each twelve months, she yielded herself up to retrospection, and lived again the romance of her girlhood days.

Vividly it all came back to her, and out from the shadows of the darkening room, came the form of her boyish lover. Merry-hearted, happy-go-lucky David Warren, whose sunny disposition won for him the smiles of all the country maidens, made him the pet of all the mothers, but alas! brought him the distrust of many of the sterner sex. In his careless, affectionate way, he had singled out Fidelia Thompson, then a rosy-cheeked, brown-eyed lass of eighteen, as his sweetheart.

At husking frolics, apple bees and quilting parties she was his chosen partner, and her tender heart soon learned its lesson of love. Their plighted vows were exchanged and sealed by the silver ring, which Fidelia had worn, till time and labor had made the slender finger too large for the tiny circle. Trustingly she yielded up her whole heart to his keeping, never doubting the faithfulness of his love, and for a time life was very bright to the simple-hearted girl. Then, like most boys of twenty-one, David grew tired of his father's farm, and longed to see the world, and seek adventures afar from his native place.

Ah, how vividly the memory of their parting came back to Fidelia, as she sat there in the darkness. David's words of love and vows of faithfulness, his promise of a speedy return to claim his bride, seemed whispered once more in her ear. Glowing visions of the wonderful things he would see and do, while seeking the fortune he was so sure of winning, returned to mock her. Yet, as if the shadow of all these weary years of waiting had already fallen upon her, Fidelia's heart was heavy and cold with a desperate fear, as she gave him her farewell kiss.

"Wait for me, dearest," said David, his own heart wrung by his sweetheart's bitter tears, and with a loving woman's unquestioning trust, Fidelia promised. The February snows were piled high around the old homestead, when the fever of restlessness drove David Warren from his native place. At

their trysting place, beneath the branches of a huge oak-tree, that in summer was clothed in leaves of darkest green, and in winter draped in spotless white, they parted. It was the eve of St. Valentine, and with a boyish blush, David handed Fidelia the valentine as a parting gift and the reminder of his affection. And that was all. The days came, and the days went, with winter snows and summer flowers, but no word ever came to Fidelia from her absent lover. Twenty years of weary heartache. Twenty years of silent struggle to forget, and he came not.

The candle died out and the room lay in darkness, but the motionless figure in the old armchair moved not.

"Aunt Fidelia," called a sweet, girlish voice up the chamber-stairs, "mother wants to know what you are doing so long up there in the cold? She says for you to come down this minute."

"With a sudden start the woman arose to her feet, and fumbling about in the dark, put away the little box and locked the bureau drawer. The warm air from the log fire in the open grate rushed over her as she stepped into the room, and she bent over it with a shiver. Her sister Jane glanced sharply at her pale face and bent figure.

"I do wish, Fidelia, you had more sense. The idea of your staying up chamber till you are all of a shake and a shiver. I aint got no patience with you," said she crossly.

Fidelia said nothing, but crouched a little nearer the fire. Her niece Bessie, threw a worsted cape softly over her aunt's shoulders, and was rewarded by a faint smile. Presently, Fidelia arose, and moving across the room took from its peg a heavy woolen shawl, and wrapped it closely about her. Then twisting a big cloud of crimson wool around her head she passed silently out of the house. Bessie Robinson looked wistfully after her aunt for a moment, then turning to her mother said anxiously:

"What is the matter with aunt Fidelia, mother?"

Mrs. Robinson frowned impatiently before answering.

"She is afflicted with a disease called faithfulness," said she, dryly.

"What do you mean, mother?"

"Oh, never mind, Bessie, you wouldn't understand if I told you," said her mother hastily.

"If you mean anything about aunt Fidelia's love story, I know all about it, mother. Every one in the village is talking about poor auntie, and calling her a lovesick old maid, and I think it 's a shame," cried Bessie indignantly, for she loved her aunt very dearly.

"I do wish folks would mind their own business," said her mother, a little ashamed of her own speech. "Your aunt Fidelia is as smart as any woman need be, only her trouble when she was young has given her queer notions."

"She was about my age wasn't she, mother, when—when she lost her lover?" asked Bessie, blushing a little.

"She was just eighteen when David Warren left the place," answered her mother, rather curtly.

"And she never heard from him again?" questioned Bessie.

"Not a word," said her mother, shortly.

Bessie said no more, but her eyes grew earnest, and the color deepened in her cheeks as she bent over her sewing. The tender secret in her own girlish heart had awakened in Bessie a new interest in aunt Fidelia's love story.

A throb of pity smote her as she thought of her aunt's silent sorrow all those weary years. What if she, too, were called upon to suffer and endure; could she hold as faithful to one love? A steady fire burned in the girl's eyes, and her lips curved into a smile, as her heart answered quickly her silent question. Be it one year or twenty, she, too, would hold true to her promise, and wait for love's fulfilment.

The sound of sleigh-bells broke the stillness, a door slammed, and Bessie's brother Joe stamped noisily into the room.

"Where is aunt Fidelia?" he asked, glancing hastily about.

"I don't know. She went out a short time ago and hasn't come in," answered his mother, without looking up.

"Then it must have been she that I saw standing under the

oak-tree at the corner of the lane. Thought it was a ghost, and old Bill nearly jumped out of his skin with fright, and threw me into a snow-bank," said Joe, crossly. "What's the matter with aunt Fidelia?" he continued roughly, "I called out to her, but she never answered nor moved, but stood there like a stoughton bottle gazing at the moon."

"Hush! my son," said Mrs. Robinson, looking at Joe, sternly, "don't let me hear you speak of your poor aunt so disrespectfully; she is peculiar, I know, but it is trouble that has made her so, and you must try and have more charity for her."

"Oh, hang it all, mother," cried Joe, a little ashamed. "I think as much of auntie as any of you, but I do wish she wouldn't act so thundering queer," and he walked out of the room, closing the door with a bang. Suddenly opening it again he tossed an envelope into his sister's lap, saying, "Here's a valentine for you, Bess; came near forgetting it. Oh, by the way, Phil Morgan has gone out West. Had a chance to go into the lumber business and make his pile. So I guess, Bess, you'll have to learn patience from aunt Fidelia's school," and Joe laughed coarsely as he stamped out of the house.

Bessie's cold fingers closed over the envelope in her hand tightly, as she listened to her brother's words. Gone! Philip gone without one word to her; what could it mean? A deadly faintness swept over her, and with a desperate effort she arose from her chair and left the room.

Mrs. Robinson dropped her work into her lap with a gesture of despair. "Another disappointed love affair to deal with," she muttered to herself. "May Heaven grant me patience."

Twelve months have come and gone, and the tale of their joys and sorrows is a thing of the past. But few changes have come to the inmates of the old homestead, where Fidelia Thompson, spinster, and her niece, Bessie, are still waiting for the fulfilment of their tender hopes. To Bessie, however, the test of unrequitted affection had not been required of her young heart, for every week there was placed in her hands a bulky

letter with a Western postmark. Philip Morgan was true to his country sweetheart, and while rapidly making his "pile" in a Western town, was eagerly looking forward to the time when he could bring Bessie out to share his prosperity. Aunt Fidelia still went about her daily duties in her sister's family, with the same patient face of silent endurance, but as the fourteenth of February drew near, the old restlessness took possession of her.

Once more in the dim quiet of her own chamber, she lived again the story of her love. Once more she took with tender fingers, the tokens of affection from the little box, and gazed at them with loving eyes. Once more, wrapped in the heavy shawl and worsted cape, she slipped away from the warm fire-side out into the chill night air and standing beneath the branches of the old oak-tree, lived over again the parting with her lover. It was all very touching and pathetic to Bessie's tender eyes, filled as they were with the glamor of her own happy love, but her practical mother viewed it in a different light. With a silent sniff she watched her sister make her preparations to go out, and as the door closed, her eyes met those of her son Joe.

"Mother, I wish that I could do something to stop aunt Fidelia's foolishness," said he, impatiently throwing down the paper he had been reading.

"So do I, Joe," answered his mother with a sigh, "for I'm heartily sick of such actions."

Joe gazed into the fire a moment thoughtfully, then rising he pulled on his greatcoat, and taking his cap in his hand opened the door.

"I'm going to keep an eye on her, anyway," said he, "for I don't think it is safe for her to go meandering off alone in the dark."

"Well, Joe, don't frighten her by coming up too suddenly," said his mother, watching him anxiously.

"Humph!" muttered Joe, as he closed the door, "I'm blessed if I don't think a good scare would cure her from prowling around that old tree, anyhow."

With his hands thrust deep into his overcoat pockets and whistling softly to himself, Joe walked slowly down the country road. The snow lay white and glistening in the moonlight, and covered field and lane with a silvery crust. Millions of brilliant stars shone in the blue winter sky, and the stillness of night brooded over all. An unusual feeling of tenderness for his aunt Fidelia crept into Joe's honest heart in spite of his rough words. A tiny wound from Cupid's dart had begun to rankle in his own boyish breast, and at this very moment his fingers touched a square envelope, containing a gay valentine, where Cupid's darts and pierced hearts were mingled gorgeously together. Its destination was a secret from all save bashful Joe, but if the glowing lines written there were the echo of Joe's real feelings, Cupid's arrow had done its work well. So, with feelings of unconfessed sympathy mingled with his scorn for his aunt's strange behavior, he hastened his footsteps.

Fidelia Thompson's slight figure stood leaning silently against the great brown trunk of the old tree, and her face looked pale and cold in the moonlight. Poor Joe, now that he was within speaking distance of his aunt, he knew not how to approach her, and stepping behind a tree he watched her silently. Five minutes passed slowly, and with a desperate effort, Joe was about to speak, when the sound of bells fell on his ear. Waiting until the sleigh should pass, he kept his place behind the tree and his eyes on his unprotected aunt. Strangely enough, the sleigh with its single occupant did not pass, but as it neared the old oak-tree, came to a standstill.

Joe started quickly forward, fearing for his aunt's safety, when the sound of the man's voice brought him to a sudden pause. Walking up to Fidelia's silent figure, the stranger held out his hand, crying in a voice that trembled a little:

"Fidelia Thompson, is it really you, or your ghost?"

With a swift cry of recognition at the sound of the man's voice, Fidelia threw out both hands, saying:

"Oh, David! have you come at last?"

Silently the man drew the woman's figure toward him.

“Have you been waiting for me all these long years, Fidelia?”

“Surely, David,” answered Fidelia, softly, “did I not give you my promise?”

The man’s arms passed swiftly about her, as he said in a husky voice:

“May God forgive me, Fidelia.”

“As I do,” said she tenderly, and the two faces met in the moonlight.

Joe kept trying to swallow a big lump in his throat, as he stole softly homeward with his wonderful news. Bursting open the door he told his astonished mother and sister of what he had seen, and together they awaited further developments in this strange love story. Soon the merry sleigh bells sounded nearer, and nearer, and ceased with a gay peal at the door. Leaning on the arm of a man, who, in spite of his bushy beard and frost bitten hair, Jane recognized as David Warren, Fidelia walked slowly into the room. With flushed cheeks and shining eyes she said quietly:

“Sister Jane, David has come home; will you not give him a welcome for my sake?”

Smothering the resentment which it was but natural that she should feel, Jane held out her hand.

“You have been a long time in coming,” she could not resist saying, as she shook hands rather coldly. With the sunny smile that in those olden days had never failed to win its way to every woman’s heart, David answered quickly:

“I have made my peace with Fidelia, who has the most to forgive, sister Jane; will you not also forget the past and be friends?” and Jane, sincerely glad in her sister’s happiness, smiled her forgiveness.

A few weeks later, the old homestead was the scene of a double wedding, when Fidelia Thompson and Bessie Robinson took upon themselves the vows of matrimony. Joe watched his aunt’s face wonderingly; so much younger and fairer had it grown since the return of her lover, and the ending of her long waiting, while Bessie looked like a full-blown rose of

blushing happiness. A big sigh swelled Joe's youthful heart, that was growing as wax beneath the glance of two bright eyes, and he looked with fierce envy upon the happy grooms-men. Ah, Joe, have patience, and your turn will surely come.

COMPENSATION.

Patient working, patient waiting,
Brings at last its own reward,
Earnest striving, ever making
Right the master, right your lord.

Ever looking upward, trying
To attain some lofty height,
Waste no time in idle sighing,
Tears but dim the clearest sight.

Cheerfully each duty doing,
As they come from day to day,
Leaving naught for future rueing,
Some time sure you'll have your pay.

Make the most of pleasures fleeting,
Let their memory cheer your way,
And, each sorrow bravely meeting,
When the hours are darkest, pray.

And your Heavenly Father hearing,
For He heeds the sparrows' fall,
And when we His anger fearing,
He will surely hear our call.

And some way or patient working,
He will compensation make,
In each trial we'll find lurking,
Seeds that blossom e'en though late.

TEMPERANCE'S THANKSGIVING TURKEY.

"I tell you, Temperance, I aint a-goin' to make no Thanksgivin' this year; times is too hard," and Silas Holbrook dropped an armful of wood into the empty woodbox, and slammed down the cover.

"Hard times aint troubled you much, Si Holbrook, and you know it," answered Temperance, with some heat. "Ye never had better luck with the crops than you 've had this year, and ye made a good five hundred clear on that south acre lot ye sold 'Squire Brown."

A gleam of satisfaction shone in Si's small black eyes at the mention of his shrewd bargain, but his thin lips still kept their determined curve as he answered quickly,

"S'pose I did, s'pose I did, 'taint no reason we should ask a lot of folks here to eat it all up, is it?"

"For shame, Silas," answered his wife, "it's yer own children that's comin' to spend Thanksgivin' with ye. Seems to me ye're growin' mighty near in yer old age."

"Near or not, Temperance, I'm sot about not makin' Thanksgivin' this year. If the children must come home you can feed 'em on corned beef and cabbage, it's what they was brought up on, and they ought to be thankful to get it."

"And half a dozen fat turkeys in yer own barnyard," answered Temperance, dryly.

"Them turkeys is all spoke for down to Bixby's store, and there won't none on 'em be eat in this house Thanksgivin' day," said Silas, ramming the tobacco into his old cob pipe and puffing away savagely. Temperance looked at her husband in silence a moment while a feeling of bitterness rose up in her heart.

"You know, Silas," said she, after a time, "that Lucy never did like corned beef and cabbage, and as for givin' it to 'em for Thanksgivin' I aint a goin' to do it."

"Give 'em codfish, then," snapped Si, crossly, "when I was a boy I was mighty glad to get codfish once in a while."

"How you do talk, Si Holbrook! Any one would think you was poor as a church mouse instead of bein' the most forehanded of anyone in these parts," answered his wife, bitterly.

"Well, well, Temperance, do stop harpin' on that string. S'pose I be forehanded, 'taint no excuse for extravagant livin', so don't pester me any more about it, for I don't make no Thanksgivin' this year," and the old man took his faded cap from its nail and pulling it on over his gray head with a determined air, marched out of the house.

Long years of hard work and self denial had left its trace on them both, but while Temperance had worked with the hope of ease and comfort in their old age, the habit of saving had so grown on Silas that the spending of a penny for anything but absolute necessities seemed a crime. For miles around there was no more prosperous farm than Silas Holbrook's, and the sum of money in the village savings banks had grown to a figure little dreamed of by anyone save the shrewd farmer himself. Two children, a son and daughter, had grown up and made homes for themselves, and little ones called him "grandpa," yet as the years went by the old man's heart seemed to harden toward his own flesh, and his one object in life was gain.

Only a few days now before Thanksgiving, and Temperance Holbrook moved about the house with a silent, preoccupied manner. The long shelves in the roomy pantry creaked beneath the weight of good things her skilful hands had prepared for the home-coming of her children. Mince pies with flaky crusts that swelled with juicy richness; golden-hued pumpkin pies that looked like great moons; spicy apple and ivory custard, all were there. Plum pudding and cranberry tarts stood side by side with spiced currants and home-made

pickles. Well might any housewife feel proud of such a display, yet Temperance gazed at the hoard of good things with a discontented look on her face.

“What does it all amount to 'thout a turkey?” she muttered to herself. “Dear me, who 'd 'a' thought Si Holbrook would ever grow'd to be sich a stingy old man! So Bixby 's spoke for all the turkeys, has he, and I a-fatten' the speckled one 'specially for the children's Thanksgivin',” and Temperance sighed. Suddenly a flash of determination lit up her face, and with a muttered “I 'll do it,” she closed the pantry door.

As it happened, there was no one in the village market save the jolly butcher himself, when Temperance drove up, and hitching her team, walked into the store.

“Good mornin', Mis' Holbrook, what can I do for you to-day?” said Bixby, coming forward.

“Well, I 'll take a small piece of corned beef, I guess,” answered Temperance, looking a little confused, then gathering up her courage, she added, “and I 'd like a few words with you in private, Mr. Bixby.”

“Sartain, sartain, Mis' Holbrook, jest's private as ye like. Aint no one 'round but dead truck, and that won't tell no tales, ye know,” laughed Bixby, waving his hand towards the great white hogs and quarters of beef that lay on the counters. Temperance's wrinkled cheeks flushed a little as she bent forward and whispered in the man's ear. Bixby looked at her a moment in surprise and then burst into a loud laugh.

“Ha, ha, Mis' Holbrook, aint you cute? All right, I 'll 'tend to it, no mistake. Under the wing, you say, ha, ha!” and the jolly butcher laughed and chuckled to himself till long after Temperance had driven out of sight.

That night Temperance lay with wide open eyes staring into the darkness, patiently waiting for the accustomed snore that would prove the depth of her husband's slumbers. At last the welcome sound smote her ear, and after listening a few moments to its regular rise and fall, she crept softly out of bed. Stealing down the stairs that would creak in spite of her bare

feet and careful stepping, Temperance crossed the great kitchen and carefully opening the pantry door, stepped inside.

The moon streamed into the window and lay in floods of light along the pantry shelves, showing to great advantage the store of good things that covered them. Since morning, however, an addition had been made to the display of eatables, for on a low shelf, ranged side by side, were six fat turkeys all ready for the market. Peering earnestly at them and softly feeling of their plumpness, Temperance came at last to the largest, fattest and fairest of them all, with speckled wings folded over a smooth, white breast. Carefully lifting one of its wings she made a small red cross with a piece of chalk she had hidden in her hand, then covering it with the wing she laid it back with the rest. Shaking and shivering with cold she retraced her steps and was soon resting quietly beside her husband. The next day Silas Holbrook drove up to Bixby's store with his load of Thanksgiving turkeys. With a pair in each hand he marched into the store and throwing them down on the counter exclaimed:

"How is that for turkeys, Bixby? Aint that a sight to make your mouth water?" and his eyes twinkled shrewdly.

"Pretty fair, Si, pretty fair," answered the cautious butcher carefully feeling them over, and looking earnestly under each wing.

"No sich turkeys anywhere 'round these parts and ye know it, Bixby," continued Si, bringing in the rest and slapping them down beside the others.

"Hum, hum, so ye say, so ye say," said Bixby, still fingering them over cautiously. At last he came to one which he looked at with serious eyes a moment, then pushing it one side, said solemnly,

"I don't want that one, anyway."

Silas looked at the man in surprise while an angry flush spread over his face. "What's the matter with that turkey, Bixby?" said he, quickly.

"Died, didn't it?" answered Bixby, looking sternly at Silas's angry face.

"Died, you—you—of course it died after I chopped its head off," almost shrieked the irate man.

Bixby still shook his head, solemnly eyeing the despised turkey the while.

"I tell ye, Si, I wouldn't give ye five cents a pound for that turkey," said he.

"No, by thunder, ye won't, for ye sha'n't have it at no price now," shouted Si, wild with anger at the man's suspicious manner.

"Come, come, friend Silas, don't get so wrathful," said Bixby, soothingly. "I'll take all the rest on 'em and give ye a fair price for 'em, too, but that one——" and he shook his head again solemnly.

Smothering his wrath as best he could Silas pocketed his money and seizing the rejected turkey jumped into his team and drove furiously homeward.

"Temperance," cried he, as he burst noisily into the kitchen, "Do ye see anything the matter with that turkey?" and he slammed the poor fowl down on the table and glared at Temperance with angry eyes.

"Why, no, Silas," answered his wife, her lips trembling a little in spite of herself, "What do ye mean?"

"Mean, woman, mean, I mean that old Bixby is either a fool or gone crazy," and he flung himself out of the room without further explanations. Looking after him a moment Temperance lifted the Turkey's wing and with a damp cloth wiped away the red cross, then while a smile kept twitching the corners of her mouth, she went quietly about her work.

Thanksgiving day the old farmhouse rang with the sound of merry voices and the patter of little feet. Bustling about with a complacent smile on her motherly face, Temperance looked after the comfort of her guests, and enjoyed to the fullest the presence of her children and grandchildren.

The savory smell of roasting turkey filled the air, and as its fragrance was wafted to her nostrils an odd smile crept around her mouth. Silent and glum, Silas stalked about the house,

taking but little notice of Temperance's preparations for the Thanksgiving dinner, and shortly they were all gathered around the long table loaded with good things.

Browned to a turn, juicy and tender, the plump turkey reposed on the great pewter platter, a sight to gladden the eyes of the waiting guests. In the midst of the clatter of knives and forks and merry voices, Temperance glanced at her husband with innocent eyes and lifting a tender morsel of the turkey to her lips, said slowly,

"I don't see nothin' the matter with this turkey, do you, Si?"

"Humph!" answered Silas, shortly.

SNOW-FLAKES.

Down from the Heavens the snow-flakes fall,
As though the angels one and all,
From out their wings, so snowy white,
Were dropping feathers soft and light.

Smiling we watched them tumbling down,
O'er city street and country town,
Till all the earth grows pure and white,
And dust and dirt fade out of sight.

And, just the same, o'er cot and hall,
The little snow-flakes gently fall,
And cover with a mantle pure
Dark spots that have no other cure.

And so it is God's love and care,
Spreads round about us everywhere,
O'er rich, the humble, one and all,
His tender loves like snow-flakes fall.

A LEAP-YEAR ROMANCE.

The "Hopkin' girls," as every one called them in Pineville, were two sisters living by themselves in the old homestead that had belonged to the family for generations.

They were neither of them young, and both were unmarried. Jane, the elder, was a little past forty, while Lucretia had just reached her thirty-fifth year. As is often the case with sisters, they were unlike as it was possible for them to be, both in looks and disposition. Jane was short and plump, with a fresh complexion, dark eyes, and smooth brown hair, in which an occasional gleam of white was beginning to show. Lucretia was more than a head taller than her sister, with a slight, graceful figure, a small delicate face, and light, wavy hair. Her gray eyes were soft and dreamy, her manners quiet and gentle, and she possessed that rare gift, a low, sweet voice.

Jane was of a more practical turn of mind, with brisk, energetic ways, a sharper glow in her dark eyes, and, when occasion required, a warmer speech than belonged to her gentle sister. Despite this difference, however, they were devotedly attached to each other, and each admired with the tenderest affection, the fine points of the other's character. They had always lived in the big white house, with heavy columns in front, that stood beside the common in the little village of Pineville.

The Baptist meeting-house, with his square belfry, stood upon the opposite side of the green, while the tall spire of the Methodist church pointed straight up to Heaven close beside it. Two stately elms stood in front of the Hopkins house like tall sentinels forever on guard, while an air of substantial prosperity surrounded it. Indeed, it was a well-known fact that the "Hopkin' girls" were decidedly well-to-do, and in the eyes of some of the more humble villagers, were as important in consequence of their possessions as if they had been Astors or Vanderbilts.

The last of a large family, the two women were bound together by the warmest ties, and both clung affectionately to the dear old homestead that had been their shelter from childhood.

Calmly and peacefully the years had flowed onward, leaving but one dark blot upon the white sands of their experience. Some ten years before Lucretia had been heartlessly jilted upon the eve of her wedding day. A cloud of mystery hung over the affair, and but few knew the real facts of the case. Henry Mansfield had come to Pineville with letters of recommendation from reliable parties, and opening a law office, he sought for business among the peaceful inhabitants of the tiny village. Clients, however, were few and far between, and had he not been possessed with a small competency wherewith to keep the wolf from the door, he would have fared but poorly. But he was young and hopeful, and with the strong magnet of Lucretia's gentle eyes, he lingered week after week, till love had woven a chain that bound their hearts together.

With a comfortable fortune of her own, Lucretia cared nothing for her lover's poverty, and the wedding day was set, when, alas! for human hopes and expectations, Henry Mansfield disappeared, suddenly and as completely as if the earth had opened and swallowed him. From that time Lucretia had heard nothing of her false lover, and she had long since ceased to hope for his return; yet, woman-like, she clung to the memory of her lost love, and found none other worthy to take his place in her heart.

The effect of all this upon Jane proved the devotion of her love, for bitterly resenting the insult to her young sister, Jane Hopkins turned a deaf ear to many a worthy suitor for her own hand, preferring to dwell with Lucretia in single blessedness, than trust to the promise of any man. And so the years sped onward, and the "Hopkin' girls" still dwelt alone in the big white house beside the village green, in the little town of Pineville.

Spring had come, and its sweet, warm breath kissed the frozen earth into new life. Lovingly the sunbeams wooed the

buds from their hiding places, and danced upon the moist earth till the grass shoots were forced to spring up and join in the mad frolic. Back from the South flocked the blue-bird and the robin, till the air was filled with the flutter of gay wings and the sound of merry piping. Over meadow and field Spring had flung her magic wand, and joyous life sprang up from every nook and corner. Windows and doors were thrown open to let the fragrant air sweep through the farmhouse and village home, and housewives were deep in the mysteries of spring cleaning.

Lucretia Hopkins stood in the open doorway, watching her sister Jane as she hurried across the green to the little Baptist parsonage. A faint smile lit up her pale face as she watched her sister's plump form, and noticed the basket of fresh eggs in her hand.

"How good and thoughtful Jane is," said she to herself with a little sigh, "she never forgets the minister's eggs, or the bag of cookies for polly. She's been like a mother to the poor child ever since Mrs. Daniels died, and I'm sure I don't know what the minister would have done without her to look after things. Jane is such a good woman, she ought to be a minister's wife herself."

Her smile deepened as these thoughts passed through her mind, for the Reverend John Daniels had been a widower for several years. A tried and trusted friend was he to the sisters, though but one of them belonged to his own particular flock. Lucretia, who sang in the choir of the Methodist church, was also a member of that denomination, while Jane was devoted heart and soul to the interests of the little Baptist church that had been her church home from childhood.

John Daniels was a quiet, thoughtful man of fifty, a true Christian and an earnest worker in the cause of Christ. For five long years he had been without a helpmeet and companion in his home life, and he had striven earnestly to be both father and mother to little Polly. Having known the Hopkins girls from childhood, he fully appreciated what excellent women they were. Lucretia he admired for her refinement and gentle

manners and the brave spirit she had shown in bearing the bitter disappointment of her life's hopes. Jane, with her warm generous heart, her busy hands that were ever doing good works, her cheerfulness and energy, seemed to him the embodiment of all that was most noble in woman. To tell the truth, John Daniels had felt for some time a warmer sentiment for Jane Hopkins than that of friendship. Yet knowing the secret resentment in her otherwise kind heart, toward all men for her sister's sake, he never dreamed of asking her to share his home.

Thus matters stood that beautiful spring morning, when Lucretia watched Jane disappear inside the parsonage door, and mused upon a little matchmaking scheme in her sisterly heart. Suddenly she saw the door of the parsonage fly open, and Jane came swiftly down the stairs toward her own home with an excited air.

"The minister is down with pneumonia," said she almost breathlessly as she followed her sister into the house. "He's a dreadfully sick man, Lucretia, and there isn't a soul to do a thing for him. That shiftless girl from the Meadows is simply good for nothing outside the kitchen. Doctor Green says he can't find a nurse high nor low. Now if you can get along for a while, Lucretia, I'm just going to nurse that poor man myself," and Jane hurried about the room in swift preparations to carry out her plan.

Lucretia looked at her sister with startled eyes. "Will—will it be quite proper, Jane?" asked she slowly.

"Proper?" cried Jane, her color rising. "I'm sure I don't know whether it will or not. It's Christian, anyway, and even if I am an old maid, Lucretia, I hope I'll never be so prim and prudish as to refuse to do a good deed to any human creature, man or woman."

"Why, Jane, you know best of course," answered Lucretia in the low, soft voice that never failed to soothe Jane's ruffled temper, "and it's just like your goodness to think of it, too."

“Well, goodness or no goodness, there isn’t any one else to do it as I can see, and I’m sure I’m not heathen enough to let the poor man die for want of proper care.”

“But there will be a little gossip, I’m afraid,” said Lucretia hesitatingly, for she knew her sister’s horror of this habit of a small village.

“I’ll have to stand it then,” answered Jane grimly, keeping on with her preparations, and Lucretia made no further objections.

As Jane had said, the minister was indeed a very sick man, and for days and even weeks his life was despaired of. Faithfully and skilfully Jane Hopkins devoted herself to the care of the sick man, and at last was rewarded by the sure hope of his recovery. Never wholly unconscious of his surroundings during these weeks of pain, John Daniels was inexpressibly comforted by Jane’s presence; and he looked with dread toward the day when he must once more dwell alone.

Little dreaming of these tender forebodings on the part of her friend and pastor, Jane bustled about the parsonage, diffusing a sense of comfort and cheerfulness long since unknown in that dreary home. In the delicious days of his convalescence, when buried in the depths of a big easy chair, he watched Jane move about the pleasant rooms and listened to her cheerful voice, he counted himself supremely blessed that even this bliss of the might-have-been was granted him. In these days, Lucretia often shared her sister’s duties in attendance upon the sick man, and kindly read and talked to him in the low, sweet voice that was her especial charm. Ten-year-old Polly was a great favorite with Lucretia, and the child would sit for hours leaning against her friend, and listening to her gentle voice as she read to her father. One day while thus occupied, Jane came suddenly into the room, and as her eyes glanced at the pretty group a swift thought took possession of her.

“What a good wife and mother Lucretia would make,” she thought as she watched her sister’s face, and noticed the clasp of her arm about Polly, “and how much John Daniels needs

a wife. It's a shame for him to live here alone, with no one to look after Polly or make his home comfortable. I don't suppose he'd dare ask Lucretia though, knowing her old trouble, but it would be the best thing that could happen to her; and perhaps if he did ask her, she might, for Polly's sake, consent."

This idea having taken possession of Jane's mind, she came to dwell upon it more and more, till it seemed a most desirable thing for all parties concerned.

A little later, as Jane was sitting alone with the minister in his pleasant study, a strange impulse seized her, and dropping her usual reserve she said suddenly,

"Don't you think you need a wife, Mr. Daniels?"

A swift color mounted to the minister's face at these strange words, and he looked at her in surprise.

"I do feel very lonely at times, Miss Hopkins," said he at last with a smile.

"That's just it, you are too much alone for your own good," continued Jane hurriedly, for now that the subject was fairly started she felt her courage growing weak. "And Polly needs a woman to look after her; one who will take a mother's interest in the child. Please do not think me forward in speaking so plainly, but now that you are well enough for me to leave you, I feel I ought as a friend, to tell you that I do not think it right for you to live here alone any longer."

To say that Rev. John's heart quickened its usual steady pace, would but lightly express the fierce throbbing that took possession of him. Was it possible, he thought, that this good woman had read his heart's secret, and desired to help him? Suddenly he remembered that it was leap-year, and with this new thought, his head fairly whirled. Leaning forward and placing a trembling hand on the arm of Jane's chair, he said quickly:

"Dear friend, can you tell me where to seek for this good woman who should be my wife?"

As Jane's eyes met his a strange sensation swept over her that dyed her face crimson, and shrinking back a little she said hurriedly:

"Why, I think Lucretia is very fond of Polly, and of course we both are interested in you, Mr. Daniels. I think she—she—" here Jane broke down, and hastily rising, she added almost desperately, "I think you had better speak to her yourself, Mr. Daniels."

"And do you think she will give her consent?" asked the minister, a strange smile on his lips, as his eyes rested on her averted face.

"I think so, at least I hope so when she knows we both desire it," stammered the usually self-possessed Jane.

John Daniels rose from his chair, and walked to the door with his guest, and taking her hand he said earnestly,

"Dear friend, you have made me very happy."

As Jane Hopkins walked swiftly home, she could not account for the strange feelings that made her wish to avoid her sister, and seek the privacy of her own room. Had she made a dreadful mistake, she thought? Would Lucretia ever know that she had asked the minister to propose? and had she done right after all? These, and many other questions, troubled Jane's kind heart, and made her glad she had no further need to visit the parsonage.

A few days later, Lucretia walked across the green to the minister's with her sister's usual offering of fresh eggs. Much to Jane's surprise and relief, she had suggested going in her place, and hoping the minister would take this opportunity to propose, she awaited her sister's return with secret anxiety.

Suddenly Lucretia came hastily into the room, and throwing herself into a chair covered her face.

"Oh, Jane! what shall I do?" she cried with a sob.

Jane looked at her in surprise.

"What is it, Lucretia, what has happened?"

"I—I have proposed to the minister and been refused," said Lucretia with a little laugh that ended in a sob.

"What!" cried Jane, her voice and her color both rising.

"At least he thinks I did, but I never thought of its being leap-year," continued Lucretia in a choked voice.

"Leap-year," said Jane scornfully, "who but children take any stock in such fancies. For goodness sake! Lucretia, do explain yourself."

"Oh, Jane! I am so mortified, but it was you I was thinking of all the time, you would make such a nice minister's wife," said Lucretia still hysterical, and without looking at her sister. Poor Jane grew red and then white and her heart throbbed painfully.

"Lucretia, stop crying and tell me plainly what you've been saying to John Daniels," said she, taking her sister by the arm and giving her a little shake.

"I—I told him he needed a wife, and that you were very fond of Polly, and—and so was I, too," here Lucretia broke down and began to cry.

"Lucretia Hopkins, how dared you?" cried Jane crimson with anger and mortification.

"Well, he said he knew it, and that much as he admired me as a friend, his heart was already given to another. He said that you knew all about it and would explain," and Lucretia wiped her eyes and looked at her sister enquiringly.

A cold horror swept over Jane as the real meaning of the minister's words flashed through her mind.

"John Daniels is the most conceited man I ever knew," she said angrily. "But I—I was talking about you all the time."

"And did you offer me to him for a wife?" asked Lucretia, springing up excitedly. "Oh, Jane! how could you."

"I'm sure I don't know, Lucretia," answered Jane grimly, "only there is no fool like an old fool, and in this case there seems to be three of a kind;" and with these words she walked out of the room and closed the door with a loud slam.

For a week or more after this the sisters went about their daily tasks with secret feelings of anger and mortification. For the first time in their lives they each cherished a feeling of resentment towards the other, and in consequence were decidedly unhappy. Poor Jane felt that never again could she look John

Daniels in the face, while Lucretia felt almost ill with her mingled feelings of shame and distress, as she thought of the minister's absurd mistake.

Meanwhile at the little parsonage over the way, the Rev. John was none too comfortable in his own mind over the strange behavior of the "Hopkin' girls." Loving Jane as he did he saw no harm in her seeking to open the door of his lips, and he longed with a lover's impatience for returning health that he might go to her and make a formal proposal for her heart and hand. But what puzzled and disturbed him was Lucretia's strange proposal which he had tried to avert by telling her of his attachment to Jane. Could it be that the poor girl's mind was slightly unhinged by her own heart trouble? So the days sped along, and the three actors in this comedy of errors grew more and more unhappy as time passed.

At last there came a day when John Daniels walked across the green to the Hopkins place, and lifting the great brass knocker he let it fall with a sound that rang loudly through the old house. The sisters had seen the minister's approach with much embarrassment, and neither of them made the slightest motion toward waiting upon their guest. Ushered into the old-fashioned parlor by the little maid-of-all-work, John Daniels waited the coming of his beloved Jane with impatience. Tenderly and hopefully he dwelt upon the thought of this interview, and his heart beat fast with anticipation.

Suddenly the door opened and he turned toward it joyfully, only to receive this message from the sisters,

"Not at home."

The sun had gone into a cloud and the air grew chill, as the minister walked slowly back to the parsonage. He felt both hurt and bewildered at the turn affairs had taken, and he began to think he had been mistaken in Jane's feelings after all. Shutting himself in his study, he pondered long upon the subject, deciding at last that the problem of a woman's moods was past solving.

The following Sabbath Jane Hopkins was torn with the conflict between duty and inclination. For years a regular atten-

dant at the little Baptist church, she never allowed anything to keep her away from a service. Yet how could she sit and listen to her pastor knowing what he must think of her conduct, and how could she meet his eye without shrinking in shame and confusion.

Duty prevailed, however, and Jane sat in her accustomed place in the meeting-house, when John Daniels rose in the pulpit and began the service. With an effort Jane lifted her eyes, and was startled at the pallor of his face. How ill he looks, she thought anxiously, and her kind heart grew soft with pity for his weakness.

It was an earnest and eloquent sermon that John Daniels preached to his congregation that first Sabbath after his illness; yet as he talked many of his people saw with what an effort the words came, and many eyes grew anxious as they watched his pale face. Suddenly his voice ceased, and without a warning he fell forward upon his face. In an instant confusion reigned in the little church, but Jane Hopkins elbowed her way fiercely through the crowd till she reached the side of the fainting man. Pushing aside the many helping hands, and heedless of the curious glances cast at her, she ministered to the comfort of the sick man with the air of one who had the right.

At last Jane's heart had spoken, and she knew, though with an agony of shame and despair, that she loved this man with a love that was stronger than herself.

So it came about that when John Daniels opened his eyes, he looked straight into Jane's face, glorified with tender compassion and the light of a great love.

His heart rose to his lips at the sight, and he whispered as she bent over him:

"Will you be my wife, Jane?"

A crimson tide swept over Jane's face and her eyes filled with tears as she answered softly:

"Hush! John."

ON EASTER MORNING.

It was Easter Sunday and the little Episcopal Church in the village of A—— was thronged with worshippers. The rich notes of the organ rose and fell upon the flower-laden air, blending harmoniously with the sweet voices of the choir. Light hearts seemed reflected in the happy faces lifted to hear that old, old story of the rising of our Saviour. Bright faces, hopeful thoughts, gladsome hearts made swift response, till they all with one glad voice loudly sang, "Rejoice! Rejoice!"

Out into the fresh spring sunshine the people passed with pleasant greetings one to another. Loudly the birds sang in the budding treetops, while the sunbeams danced among the tender green of the shooting grass blades. A youth and maiden walked slowly homeward through the village street. The light of a first tender passion illumined their faces.

"I have made my choice, Ruth," said Nelson Dudley at last. "I'm going to study for the ministry."

"Yes," answered Ruth gravely, lifting her blue eyes to her lover's face. "I know, and I am glad."

"But, Ruth, I must go away, perhaps for several years," said Nelson, a little sadly.

"We are young, Nelson, and we can wait," said Ruth softly, a faint color rising to her cheeks.

"And will you, Ruth?" asked he, an anxious note in his voice.

"Always," answered the girl earnestly.

So these two parted and went their separate ways, each carrying a heart filled with youthful love, holy purposes and noble desires.

Into the little village where dwelt Ruth Partridge there came that foul disease called the gold fever. For long years Jason Partridge had been a prosperous and successful farmer; in a

small way, to be sure, yet having a rich reward for each humble effort he was considered a lucky man by friends and neighbors.

There had come to him the sudden desire for great riches; to seek for himself in the far West the yellow gold that would satisfy every earthly ambition. Despite the forebodings of some and the counsel of many, he sold his homestead, gathered together his household goods, and with his wife and daughter started on that long and perilous journey. To tell the story of that awful time would be but to repeat the tragic tale so often read in the newspapers of that date of the fate of the emigrant. Jason Partridge and his wife never reached the haven of their hopes. Stricken with fever brought on by exposure and fatigue, they left their weary bodies asleep on the desert plains, there to rest till that last great Easter day of the future. Poor, broken-hearted Ruth struggled onward, till civilization was reached in a small Western town.

Eight years have come and gone, leaving the trail of many changes in the lives of Nelson Dudley and Ruth Partridge.

Swept along by the tide of prosperity, Nelson was rapidly gaining the goal of his ambitions. As rector of an influential church in an Eastern city, the hopes of his youth bid fair to be realized.

Endowed with unusual intellectual gifts and with an earnest desire to always stand as the image of his Maker, he was admired and beloved by all his people. The sad news of the tragic fate which had befallen Jason Partridge and his family had been the one great sorrow of his youth. To lose forever the sweet hope of calling Ruth his wife for a time seemed to paralyze his intellect and dull his ambition. With a mighty effort he at last buried his grief, comforted by the sure hope of a meeting with his beloved in the great beyond. How true it is that the circumstances in which one is placed have a strong influence over the important issues of our lives.

With the passing years the memory of his love for Ruth became a memory only. Sweet and holy, yet strangely remote, as of some fond dream of another existence. To some minds

this power of putting away our sorrows seems but the forgetfulness of a shallow nature. Yet it is the wisest gift of an ever wise Father to his earthly children. For how can life's duties be well performed if the human heart forever grieves?

Into Nelson's life had come another love, another sweet influence, womanly and pure. In the hour of his manhood's time and his wordly success he was to find a true helpmeet in Constance Browning, and the coming Easter would find them man and wife.

In a large Western city the life of Ruth Partridge was not unlike thousands of other girls, who, poor, friendless and alone, struggle daily for mere existence. Behind the counter of a large dry goods emporium she toiled early and late. Always of a delicate constitution, the fearful exposure of that journey across the plains had left its mark upon her frail body. With a will power stronger than her physical nature, she performed her daily tasks, yet knowing full well her failing strength. With bitter heartache and weary longing had she waited for some word from her youthful lover. Once, twice, even three times, had she written to her old home for news of Nelson Dudley—letters which, alas, never reached their destination. Yet the hope which ever dwells in the heart of woman was strong within her, and she still waited, watched and prayed.

Once there had come to Ruth Partridge the offer of a good man's love, the shelter of his home, the protection of an honored name. But for Ruth, to love once was to love for all time, and the temptation to marry for a home never came to her.

The early springtime had come and all nature was awakening from her winter's sleep. To Ruth this swift change from the bracing air of winter to the mild, enervating warmth of spring was like the giving way of some prop which upheld her. A sudden faintness had overtaken her while at her work. The busy proprietor of the store had given her a dismissal and another girl had taken her place.

"A long rest is what you need," said the physician, and Ruth smiled sadly as she thought of her small hoard of sav-

ings. Suddenly the thought of that little country village, where she had passed her childhood, came to her like a vision. An overwhelming desire took possession of her to once more visit its haunts, to see once more her old home. With feverish haste she gathered together her few belongings, and nerving herself for the journey she turned her face eastward.

Again it is Easter Sunday. Once more the church bells ring out the joyful news that Christ our Lord is risen, is risen today. Once more the earth unlocks her tomb and the spirit of spring comes forth to gladden our hearts. The bluebird and the robbin sing in the treetops and the voices of the air join in their melody.

The aristocratic congregation at St. Mark's pass decorously to their seats with a subdued rustle of new spring gowns. Dainty perfumes mingle their odor with the sweet scent of the lilies about the altar. Golden sunshine streams through the painted windows and illumines the face of the Rev. Nelson Dudley as he stands in his white robes before his people. A feeling of inexpressible joy and thanksgiving fills his heart as he turns the leaves of his prayer book. Without lifting his eyes, he is yet conscious of the tender gaze of his young wife sitting in the pew opposite. Surely the Lord has favored his servant, inasmuch that the lines of his life have fallen in pleasant places. His heart is filled with gratitude, and it is with an effort that he reads the opening words of the service in his usual clear voice.

As the congregation rise, a slight, black-robed figure walks slowly into a pew near the open door and silently bows her head. At the first sound of the minister's voice she looks up with a startled glance, and the color rushes in a wild flood to her pale face. All through the service she listens with eager attention. When the people press forward to the chancel to partake of the holy communion, she patiently waits her turn. Then with slow, uncertain footsteps she moves, unnoticed, to the altar. Kneeling upon the cushion with head bowed against the chancel rail, a great peace falls upon the heart of this

woman. All the longing, the heartache, the disappointment of earthly hopes are swept away, and a calm that is not of earth falls upon her tired spirit.

“Father in heaven, I thank thee,” she whispers faintly.

One by one the kneeling figures rise and go away, yet still that black-robed form moves not. The Rev. Nelson Dudley pauses before her, repeating the words of his holy office, then passes on.

Once more he stands beside her and softly touches the still form with his slender finger. He again repeats those sacred words, but the woman makes no response.

A vague feeling of alarm stirs him. Bending over her he gently lifts the bowed head, and a ray of sunshine falls softly upon the cold, white face of Ruth Partridge.

A PRAYER.

I am not worthy, Lord: help thou thy child
To stem the current of life's passions wild!
From worldly dross and every vain desire
Lift thou mine eyes, and purer thoughts inspire!
I am so weak the flesh will not obey,
E'en though my spirit, Lord, is thine alway;
But, while temptations throng on every side,
And pleasure's road is smooth and broad and wide,
The human soul doth long for quiet sleep,
And in its languorous dreams the senses steep,
But, oh, my Father, I have work to do,
And to its motive let my soul be true,
Nor swerve aside from purpose ever high,
But, toiling upward, unto thee draw nigh!

JERUSHA'S "RISIN' UP."

"The Fourth o' July don't come but once a year, Jerusha, an' ye don't orter bregrudge a man the privilege o' celebratin'," said Abel Balcome, setting down the pail of water he had just brought in for his wife.

"'Taint that, Abel, ye know it aint," answered Jerusha; "it's the way ye have o'doin on't, I object to. This trapsin' down to the village with a parcel o' menfolks, a-spendin' all yer savin's an' stayin' out till midnight, don't seem to me a Christian way o' celebratin' the Nation's Independence."

"Sho! Jerusha, that's jest a woman's way o' lookin' on't," answered Abel, fanning himself with his big straw hat. "How on 'arth would a man celebrate ef he didn't go to the village?"

"Goin' to the village aint the worst on 't," said his wife, looking at him a little sternly. "It's the way the hull lot on ye come home. Seems to me ye must have worked dreadful hard last Fourth a-celebratin' to get so tired as to fall asleep on the road. Ef Si Holbrook's old white mare hadn't 'a' knowed the way home as well as any human, Si never 'd 'a' got there, for he was sound asleep an' a-snoarin' when the mare walked into the dooryard, an' Temperance had to put her up an' throw a dipper o' water over Si to wake him. Then Caleb Brown must 'a' been putty far gone to ha' tried to light his pipe bottom-side-up, an' let the hot ashes fall on to his best pants till they burned a hole the size o' a silver dollar. His wife served him jest right a-puttin' in a red patch into those blue trousers, an' a-makin' of him wear 'em to meetin'. Keeps him sort o' reminded o' his failin's."

"Well, well, Jerusha, accidents will happen, ye know," said Abel growing red and struggling with an irrepressible grin at certain recollections. "But ye haint no call to find fault with me 'cos o' my neighbors' shortcomin's," added he.

Jerusha Balcome straightened from the tub of clothes over which she was bending, and looked at her husband a moment in silence.

“Seems to me there aint a great sight o’ difference ’tween a man who goes to sleep in his wagon, or lights his pipe upside-down, an’ a man as forgets whether he lives in a house or a barn an’ goes to sleep in a haymow till his wife wakes him up. I guess it all comes from the same kind o’ complaint,” said she, dryly.

Abel looked confused but said nothing.

“Ef any o’ you menfolks ever thought o’ takin’ your wives along to help celebrate, there’d be more sense in ye’re goin’; but somehow there allus seems to be plenty o’ reasons why the women-folks should stay to home,” continued Jerusha, once more plunging her arms into her tub and wringing out a sheet vigorously.

“Well, home ’s the place for womenfolks mostly, aint it?” said Abel, recovering himself as his wife branched off from a too personal application of her subject.

“Sometimes ’t is an’ sometimes ’t isn’t,” said Jerusha. “I guess a woman likes a change once in a while as well’s a man. An’ I guess a woman is jest as much interested in the Day o’ Independence an’ would like to celebrate it, as any o’ you menfolks. I tell you what, Abel Balcome, there’s going to be a risin’ up o’ the women one o’ these days.”

Abel’s honest blue eyes rounded out and his under jaw drooped at these words from his usually patient wife.

“Why, Jerusha, ye aint got to be on o’ them woman’s rights women, have ye?” he asked, almost meekly.

“Women have rights, haint they?” answered his wife, evasively, “an’ the time ’s a-comin’ when they’re a-goin to use ’em, too.

An uncomfortable silence followed this speech, while Jerusha’s clothes-basket accumulated a pile of snowy garments, and Abel puttered away at the hoe he was mending. The warm sunshine flooded the great kitchen; the birds sang loudly in the appletree by the open window, and the bees hummed

joyously in the fragrant air. All nature was glorified by the warm breath of summer. A sweet, girlish voice, singing a gay tune, sounded near the open window, and a bright face was thrust inside.

"Clothes ready to hang out, aunt Jerusha?" called the voice.

"Yes, Polly," answered Jerusha, glancing up with a smile, "but ye don't ought to heft that great basket all alone. Here, Abel, jest you take hold on't, too."

"Certain, certain," said Abel dropping his hoe to do his wife's bidding. But with a swift motion, Polly lifted the basket in her strong arms, and stepped outside the door.

"Well, I vum! ef Polly haint got considerable muscle for a city girl, I 'll give up!" said Abel, watching the girl's easy motions admiringly.

"Gymnastics and lawn-tennis, uncle Abel," cried Polly, glancing over her shoulder, while she swiftly pinned the wet garments to the line.

"You don't say! Well, ef them sort o' new-fangled games can make a gal as strong an' handsome as my niece Polly, I don't blame the gals for playin' on 'em," said Abel, picking up his hoe and moving toward the door.

"There, Abel, don't go to settin' Polly up over her looks," said Jerusha. "Handsome is as handsome does, is my motto."

"Well, ye can't find much fault with that part on 't either, as I can see," answered Abel, smiling good-naturedly at the busy girl, as he passed her on his way to the potato field.

Jerusha Balcome's eyes followed her husband's, till they, too, rested affectionately upon the wind-tossed hair of Polly's head. Pleasant, indeed, was the sight of the girlish figure about the old farmhouse.

Long and lonely had been the years since their only boy had gone away to seek his fortune. How lonely, only the mother's heart could tell, and Polly's summer visits were bright spots in the lives of the old couple.

Abel Balcome's brother Joseph had married the widow Smith when Polly was about five years old. With added years came a large family, and Polly's home life was consequently

a busy one. The proprietor of a thriving grocery business in the city of B——, Joseph Balcome was considered a prosperous man; yet the demands of an expensive family had nearly drained his income. The post of elder sister is not an easy one at best, and keenly conscious of the half tie that bound her to her stepfather's household, Polly's proud spirit had long yearned for freedom. With a strong artistic temperament, and a passionate love for nature, the summer months spent at the old farm, that nestled amid such scenery as only Vermont can show, were delightful ones to Polly. To transfer to canvass even a shadow of the Great Artist's handiwork was intense joy. The light and shade, the color and glow, that were thrown with such lavish hand over mountains, hills and valleys, were an endless delight to her artist eyes.

The early sunrise, that touched the sleeping earth with rosy hues and turned the dewdrops into sparking gems; the golden noon, when field and meadow, lake and brook, glowed with amber fire; the setting sun's goodnight kiss, that flushed with crimson the twilight sky, and the looming mountain-tops, gray and sombre, that stand majestic through the changing years—all were beloved by the girl, whose soul hungered for beauty and its natural food. So, when the rest of the family hurried to some cheap seaside resort, to spend the warm season, Polly turned her eager eyes toward the old farmhouse among the Vermont hills, and the loving welcome of uncle Abel and aunt Jerusha Balcome. So glad was she to get away from the noise and din of the city, into the sweet quiet of country life, that she had really forgotten the near approach of our nation's greatest holiday, the Fourth of July.

Awake with the birds at dawn, Polly walked into the kitchen one morning to find her uncle Abel standing in the middle of the room, with a strange bewildered look on his pleasant face. The fireless hearth, the unset breakfast table, and the absence of aunt Jerusha surprised Polly into an exclamation of—

“What is the matter, uncle Abel?”

Abel Balcome turned and looked at Polly with solemn eyes.

"Polly," said he, slowly, and with a slight tremor in his voice, "yer aunt Jerusha 's ris' an' gone."

"Gone where?" cried the astonished girl.

"She said there'd be a risin' up o' the women one o' these days; an' Jerusha 's a woman o' her word. An' now she's gone," continued Abel, dejectedly.

"But where?" asked Polly, beginning to grow alarmed.

"Well, I s'pose maybe she 's gone down to the village to celebrate. She said she thought women had jest as much right to as the menfolks, an' I don't know but they have," said Abel.

"Celebrate what, uncle Abel?" said Polly, still puzzled.

"Polly Smith!" cried Abel, a little sharply, "don't ye know that this day is the glorious Fourth o' July, when——"

A merry peal of laughter drowned his words, as light began to dawn upon Polly.

"O uncle! I had forgotten all about the great and glorious Fourth, though I'm not usually so unpatriotic. But it seems so nice to be where it is quiet, when one lives most of the year in a noisy city," said Polly, gaily. "So you think auntie has gone to the village to celebrate, do you? She couldn't have walked, could she?"

"The old mare 's gone, too," answered Abel, soberly.

With an effort Polly restrained her laughter, though her eyes twinkled merrily as she took in the situation.

"Never mind, uncle Abel; we'll celebrate at home this year. But first, let us see what we can do about breakfast," said she, bustling about the room and setting forth the dishes for the morning meal. An empty bread-plate, standing beside a pitcher half filled with milk, upon the table, with a bowl and spoon, told how Jerusha had fortified herself for the journey.

For an hour or so Abel wandered about looking disconsolate and unhappy, when he, too, disappeared, and glancing down the country road, Polly saw his stout form walking slowly toward the village.

"Poor uncle Abel! he couldn't wait any longer," said she,

smiling, as she watched him out of sight. Then, with a feeling of delightful freedom, and with no thought of fear at being alone so far from neighbors, she settled herself with paints and brushes to enjoy herself in her own fashion.

The village green was crowded with the inhabitants of the little place, and the farmers' teams stood hitched to posts on the outside. From a raised platform patriotic speeches were being made, and strains of martial music floated on the summer air. The proprietors of lemonade stands were doing a thriving business, as were also the venders of peanuts and popcorn. Hot and dusty, with the perspiration pouring down his ruddy cheeks, Abel Balcome reached the scene of the festivity. His three-mile walk had been a hard pull through the hot sun, but, determined to reach the goal of former good times, he had toiled on. With anxious eyes he scanned vehicles that stood about the green, till at last he spied the familiar face of his old gray mare, and his wife's tall form sitting in the buggy. With a dignified, earnest expression on her wrinkled face, Jerusha was listening to the speaker with rapt attention.

A strange feeling of reserve, mingled with some bitterness, kept Abel from approaching the spot, and shrinking into the background, he avoided a meeting with his wife.

The long hot day dragged on, but for Abel Balcome the old-time zest in the program seemed gone. The gossip and jokes of his friends and neighbors as they stood about the green, or lounged around the bar of the village tavern, seemed flat and pointless. The taste of the lemonade with a dash of something stronger, for the first time was repugnant to him, while the smell of ginger ale, hop beer and other kinds of drink, reminded him of Jerusha's sarcastic remarks of a few days before. In spite of himself his eyes and thoughts would wander towards the lonely figure sitting sedately in the old buggy. At last the sun sank behind the western sky, and the lengthening twilight shadows made the prospect of the homeward walk less tedious than that of the morning. Not for a moment did he think of occupying his rightful share of the

buggy behind his old mare. So, with the gathering darkness he turned his face homeward, and started on his three-mile walk to the farm.

Meanwhile, Polly had spent the time so happily that the coming twilight was a surprise to her. Thinking her uncle and aunt would soon return, she hastened to prepare supper for the old couple, who, no doubt, would be tired after their day at the village. Smiling a little over the circumstances of their going, and humming softly to herself, Polly stepped lightly about the roomy kitchen.

Suddenly a loud knock sounded on the front door, while the tall shadow of a man's figure lay across the walk. Now, usually, Polly Smith was a brave girl, but the thought of meeting a strange man at this hour, and in this lonely place, so unprotected, startled her. Silently she stood thinking a moment, then with a swift impulse she crept softly across the room to the farthest corner. Stepping behind a tall-backed chair with a deep flounce, she crouched down, and was completely hidden from sight. Rap, rap, rap! again sounded the old brass knocker, and then, oh! horror! the door-knob was turned, and the door given a gentle shake.

"Who could it be?" thought Polly from her hiding place. Brisk steps sounded on the gravel walk that led to the back door which alas! stood open.

In walked the stranger, and coolly glanced around the empty room.

"The impudent fellow, what on earth can he want?" thought Polly, peeping slyly from behind the old chair.

The sight of a tall, athletic young man in a stylish suit of light gray, with an up-to-date travelling-bag and a walking-stick, made Polly's black eyes grow big with astonishment. Of course this man wasn't a tramp or a robber. But the swift thought that he might be one of those gentleman burglars who no doubt would be as fashionably dressed as this handsome fellow, gave poor Polly's heart another quake. With a swift glance around, the stranger walked into the sitting-room,

opened the door of the little bedroom, and finding them all vacant, walked back to the kitchen, and throwing himself into a rocking-chair, took off his hat and fanned himself.

“How natural it all looks,” said he aloud, “and how good it seems to be at home again.”

At these words, and the sound of his voice, Polly’s fears vanished.

“It’s cousin Tom Balcome,” thought she with a delightful thrill. “How ridiculous for me to be hiding here. What will he think of me?”

“Supper seems to be nearly ready; so mother can’t have gone far,” said he again aloud, as he leaned back and closed his eyes with a tired yawn.

Now was her chance, thought Polly, to slip out of her embarrassing position. Cautiously she sought to rise, when unfortunately for her plan, her dress was caught beneath the legs of the chair, and as she arose, it fell with a loud crash.

Up sprang the young man, with decidedly wide-open eyes that gazed at Polly with astonishment. With tousled hair, blushing cheeks, and twinkling eyes, Polly walked towards him with outstretched hand.

“How do you do, cousin Tom?” said she demurely.

“I’m very well, thank you, Miss,” here the young man paused inquiringly.

“Oh! I’m Polly. Don’t you remember cousin Polly Smith?” said the girl, growing more and more crimson at his earnest gaze.

“What, the little Polly whom I left in short dresses and long curls?” exclaimed Tom.

“The very same,” answered Polly, smiling.

“How glad I am to see you,” said Tom, with a hearty grasp of her hand. “But where did you spring from so suddenly. I thought there was no one here?”

“I—I was behind the chair in the corner,” stammered Polly.

“Were you afraid?” said Tom, laughing.

“Well, you see, cousin Tom, uncle and aunt have gone to

the village, and being alone, I did feel afraid when I saw a strange man coming, and so I hid," explained Polly with more blushes.

"But what makes you so sure I am cousin Tom?" asked he.

"Oh. I remembered your voice soon as you spoke, and though you have grown so big, you haven't changed so very much," said Polly, looking at him a little shyly.

"And I never dreamed that the little girl I used to play with so long ago, had grown to be a charming young lady," answered Tom admiringly.

"Thanks, cousin Tom, but it's not the fashion to pay compliments in the country," laughed Polly. "Now I must finish getting the supper, for aunt and uncle will be at home soon."

"Let me help, too, Polly," cried Tom, and together they went merrily to work.

Jerusha Balcome drove slowly homeward along the lonely country road. The hot day had glided into the cool shadows of night. An early moon threw silvery gleams along the road, and a light dew had laid the thick dust. The day had been a pleasant one to Jerusha. The unusual excitement of seeing so many people and the eloquent speeches of the great men of the place had aroused and interested her greatly. In spite of this, however, she had not forgotten her husband for a moment, and a little sigh escaped her as she thought how pleasant it would have been had they gone together.

"But he never 'd ha' asked me," muttered she to herself, "an' I jest had to rise up an' start myself."

Suddenly the mare shied a little as they passed a foot passenger on the road.

"That man looked 'mazin' like Abel," said Jerusha, giving the reins a harder pull to urge the mare along. As she did so something gave way, and the surprised animal stopped short.

"Dear me! What on 'arth am I a-goin' to do now?" said Jerusha in dismay.

"What's the matter, Jerusha?" called out a familiar voice.

"Why, Abel Balcome, is that you? Ef I aint glad," cried Jerusha, in a relieved voice.

"Anything broke?" asked Abel, coming up and examining the harness.

"Yes, this pesky rein has given out, an' we aint near home yet," answered his wife.

"Well, t'aint much of a job to fix it," said Abel, whipping out his knife and a bit of string from his pocket.

In five minutes the rein was as good as new, and Abel coolly turned the wheel and stepped into the buggy beside his wife. With a loud "Go 'long!" to which the mare responded, with a backward look at her master's face, they started off at a brisk trot.

"Have you had a good time, Jerusha?" said Abel after a little.

"Yes, Abel, I have," answered his wife in a satisfied tone. "'T was jest grand to hear them speeches, an' the music an' see the folks, too. An' I took dinner with Mary Jane Newton, she 't was a Brown, ye know, an' she was dreadful glad I come."

A short silence fell between them, and then Abel said, earnestly:

"Well, Jerusha, I've been a-thinking this thing over, an' ef the Lord spares us both to see another Fourth o' July, I think we 'd better celebrate it together."

"I'd like it 'mazin' well, Abel," answered Jerusha, simply. And peace fell upon the hearts of the worthy couple.

As they paused before the farmhouse door, two figures came out to meet them.

"Ef there aint a strange man with Polly," said Abel a little gruffly. But the mother's eyes were keener, and as Tom sprang forward to lift her from the buggy, she cried in a trembling voice:

"Oh! my boy, my boy!"

"Yes, mother dear, I've come home again," said Tom, kissing her tenderly, and Jerusha's cup of joy was full.

How can I tell the story of the next few months! The golden summer days flew by with joy-laden wings to the inmates of

the farmhouse. To Tom and Polly all things seemed glorified by the mere presence of the other, and to rake hay for uncle Abel, or pick currants for aunt Jerusha, was both a joy and delight. With their boy at home the years seemed to fall away from Abel and Jerusha, and they grew young again as they watched the happy faces of their children.

A lovely twilight was gathering around aunt Jerusha as she sat by the open door, and Tom and Polly walked in and knelt down beside her chair.

“Mother,” said Tom, “Polly has promised to be my wife. Are you glad?”

The tender tears slid softly down the wrinkled cheeks, as with a hand on each bowed head she said quickly:

“More glad than I can say, Tom, dear. May god bless you both.”

Uncle Abel coming in just then saw the little tableau, and brushing the back of his hand across his eyes he exclaimed:

“Well, I vum?”

THOUGHTS OF EASTER.

Nature wakes from winter's sleep,
And her promise sure does keep,
Sweeter, purer life is born,
When we greet our Easter morn.

Buds and blossoms, birds and flowers,
Spring to greet fair April's showers,
Peace and joy our hearts do sway
With the hope of Easter day.

Let the bells in triumph ring,
While the birds sweet anthems sing,
Tender thoughts of Christ abide,
In our hearts at Easter tide.

FOR ALL TIME.

How she loved him! Sitting there, a quiet figure in the lonely park, her great earnest eyes lifted to the handsome face of the man before her, Prudence Eldridge's thoughts flew swiftly back over the past years. When was there a time she had not loved him?

As children together in the little country village they both called home, he had been her cherished playmate; hand in hand they had tripped through the village streets to the little red schoolhouse on the hill, sharing each others' dinners, and looking over the same book. Later on, a tall girl of sixteen with a sweet delicate face, she had timidly accepted his lover-like airs of ownership, and yielded up her whole heart to his keeping.

Then had come their first separation, when Leon Durrant left the village to attend the academy in an adjoining town, and Prudence had blushing taken the teacher's chair in the little country school where she had so long been a pupil.

Tender and sweet were the missives that flew back and forth between them as the weeks went by; one long dream of bliss the summer vacation, when, side by side they wandered through fragrant woods and shady country roads. What brilliant plans they made for the future! what wonderful castles in the air they built, each vying with the other in happy imaginings! No thought of the cloud that was to dim the brightness of these wondrous visions came to disturb their trust. A sudden epidemic swept over the village carrying away many victims, among whom were Leon Durrant's parents, leaving him alone and homeless.

Leon faced the situation bravely, and giving up for a time his cherished plan of attending a medical college, he took the drudgery of a clerkship in a country store as a means of present support.

Then it was that Prudence Eldridge's womanly helpfulness came to the front. The only child of a wealthy farmer, she had no occasion to use the salary she earned as teacher of the district school; naturally thrifty and industrious, she taught for the love of her work as well as a disinclination to be idle.

The little pile of banknotes carefully laid away from year to year, had grown to a considerable sum, and full of pride and ambition for her lover, Prudence urged Leon to use it for his medical studies. Shrinking at first from accepting the obligation, his proud spirit was conquered at last, and with his heart full of love and reverence for his faithful sweetheart, he tenderly kissed her good-bye, and in a distant city plunged with his whole soul into the studies that were to lead to the goal of his hopes.

Five years rolled swiftly by, bringing many changes in the lives of both. The death of her mother caused Prudence to give up her school and strive to cheer the loneliness of her bereaved father. Quietly happy in making bright the home life, she fed her heart on the short letters, and brief visits of her busy lover, patiently waiting for the fruition of her hopes. Dreaming dreams as girls will, and blushing softly at the visions they called up, the days went by, one by one.

The five years had been almost magical in their effect on Leon Durrant. Proving himself a brilliant scholar, and wonderfully gifted in surgery, he seemed to almost plough his way through every obstacle that beset his path, till loud and earnest were the praises that fell from the lips of professors and fellow students. Roused to the highest pitch of enthusiasm and ambition, he skilfully and successfully performed a difficult operation, thereby saving the life of one of the wealthiest young men in the city.

A warm friendship sprung up between the two young men, John Markman refusing the attendance of any physician save the young doctor who had saved his life. A sea voyage being necessary to the complete recovery of the patient, Leon Durrant had been the physician John Markman had chosen to accompany him, offering him a salary no poor man could well

refuse. One cool day late in the fall, Leon made a hurried journey to his old home to tell Prudence of his chance to go abroad, and to prepare her for the long separation.

As the train carried him nearer and nearer to his journey's end a strange feeling of annoyance and perplexity filled his mind and clouded his usually bright face. Can it be that he dreads to meet his patient little sweetheart, and shrinks from the thought of her tender caresses? Alas! during the last twelve months, when fortune and friends seem at last within his grasp, the sweet girl face with its wistful eyes has grown more and more dim to his present vision, and seems to belong alone to his past life.

The thought of his unpaid debt to her fills him with a disagreeable sense of irritation, and makes him long for the generous salary so soon to be his; yet he forgets the greater debt of love and devotion he owes her. Standing before her now in the village park where they have come for this last farewell, he pours out to her his plans for the future, enthusiastically describing his friend Markman, his great generosity and the prospects of his success in the Old World.

How handsome he looked; tall and broad shouldered, his dark eyes full of a restless fire, his perfect white teeth gleaming through his heavy moustache as he talked; yet to Prudence the change in him was something terrible to see, and her heart sinks down heavy in her bosom. How she loved him! only once since he came has he carelessly brushed her cheek with his lips, while, oh, heaven! how hungry her heart was for the old warmth of his lavished kisses; and now, hark! what is it he is saying?

"I am glad you take it so calmly, Prudence; I know you must feel with me that it is best for me to go."

"Yes, it is best," her dry lips made answer faintly.

"I may be gone several years," he went on, hurrying over his words nervously, "and I should not wish you to feel bound by that old promise to wait for me, if you have a better offer."

A better offer! oh, the dumb agony of those true eyes lifted to his face; what can he mean?

"In a few months I hope to be able to return the money you loaned me, Prudence," he continued, walking restlessly up and down the path before her, "I shall be glad to have the debt settled."

"Oh! Leon, don't," cried Prudence, hurt beyond endurance.

"I know your generous heart, Prue," said he, a little shamed by the pain in her voice, "but a fellow doesn't like to be in debt to a woman longer than he can help, you know."

In debt to a woman; how strange the words sounded from his lips; so she was only "a woman" now. How cold it was growing; how mournfully the wind swept through the trees; a long shiver ran over her, and she trembled visibly.

"You are taking cold, Prudence," looking at her suddenly, "how careless of me to let you sit here so long, come, let us go back to the house."

Passively she let him lead her by the arm, and they walked silently down the street.

"I guess I won't come in to-night," said Leon, feeling strangely uncomfortable at the rigid silence of the figure beside him, "and I shall have to be off early in the morning; will you not wish me a successful voyage?"

"I wish you success," she answered mechanically, holding out a cold, lifeless hand. A twinge of remorse passed over him, and swiftly he touched her cold lips with his own.

"Good bye, Prudence, take care of yourself while I am away."

"Good bye, Leon." The door closed between them, and he was gone.

Slowly she dragged her heavy feet up the stairs to her room, and shutting the door sank down into the nearest chair. How tired she is; heavily she moves towards the bureau and fumbling for the match box strikes a light. The gleam of the blazing match falls on the pictured face of Leon Durrant as it stands in its frame on the bureau and the handsome dark eyes seem to smile at her with the old love. The match goes

out, and the shadows of night fill the room once more, while Prudence, grasping the picture in her shaking hands kisses it passionately over and over again.

"Oh! my God, let me die," she moans, falling face downward on the floor, with the picture held close to her aching heart.

Hour after hour passed by and still she lay motionless. The wind sweeps the branches of the trees against the window, making ghostly tappings in the dark room, and mournful sighs and sobs wail down the great old-fashioned chimney. Twelve strokes of the village clock ring out on the still night air, and as the last stroke dies away, Prudence lifts herself slowly to her feet. Drawing down the curtains, she lights, one after the other, the candles scattered about the room, on stands, bureau and mantel, till every shadow has fled before the brilliant flood of light; then slowly, her fingers feeling stiff and clumsy, she unfastens the close-fitting dress, and stepping out of its folds, flings it across a chair. Wrapping a heavy white shawl about her shoulders, she moves swiftly across the room and kneels down before a tall, old-fashioned chest of drawers. A faint smell of violets scents the air, as Prudence opens the lower drawer and lifts out pile after pile of snowy linen for bed, table and bath, all of the finest and daintiest, and marked by her own delicate fingers. Placing them in one great pile on the floor, she opens the next drawer, and with close-pressed lips empties its contents beside the others. Oh! the tender thoughts, the passionate love that has been sewed stitch by stitch into these dainty lace-trimmed garments; oh, the precious hopes, the smiles and blushes, the girlish tears, only God and her own heart can ever know. One by one the old chest empties its drawers on the floor, each one telling its tale of tender hopes and unfulfilled desires.

At last but one is left unopened, and as she stands before it, she leans her head against its locked contents, while her form shakes with the sobs so long suppressed; then wrenching open the drawer, she carefully lifts out a package wrapped in tissue paper. Untying the ribbon that binds it, she softly touches it

with her trembling lips. A dainty house jacket with cap to match, scarlet faced and richly embroidered by her own hands, lay spread out before her. "For Leon, from Prudence," was written on a small card and tied to one of the buttons of the jacket.

One more package wrapped in tissue paper Prudence lays beside the rest, though the roll of rich lavender silk receives but a passing glance from her tear-dimmed eyes. Opening the door of a deep closet, she drags out a great empty trunk, and carefully and neatly packs away each article of that simple wedding outfit; before closing the lid, she takes Leon Durrant's picture from its place on her bureau, and with one long kiss on its cold, smiling face, she places it carefully on the pile of clothing in the trunk; then quickly dropping the lid, she turns the key in the lock. The last sputtering candle has gone out, and the gray dawn is creeping in at the window, when Prudence slips shivering into her bed.

In a sparsely furnished chamber of the country hotel, Leon Durrant has passed a sleepless night, tossing restlessly about and feeling strangely uncomfortable. Something of the agony in Prudence's eyes, as they last met his own, has pierced through the crust of selfishness that has chilled the warmth of his old love, and left a bitter sting; yet, man-like, his vanity demands even the greater sacrifice of a more open show of regret on Prudence's part, and as he springs out of bed and makes a hasty toilet he mutters savagely to himself,

"How cold and undemonstrative Prudence has grown, how could I ever imagine we were suited to each other." Then throwing off all feeling of regret or annoyance his thoughts fly to the brilliant promises for the future, and before many days have passed away the broad ocean rolls between them.

Slowly the winter days drag themselves away, while Prudence Eldridge's outward life moves on in the same quiet round of homely duties. Never again did she yield to that passionate storm of feeling that had swept with such intensity

of force over her young heart; but with the closing of that fast locked trunk, she had closed the door of her affections, and sealed it with a proud strength, before unknown.

None but the keenest eyes could detect the change that had passed over her, for while the pink in the rounded cheeks grew more delicate in its shadings, and the tender light in the blue eyes was quenched by a prouder gleam, the new dignity of carriage her girlish form had acquired was vastly becoming, and who could tell that this was the mask that God had given her to hide from the world her crushed and wounded heart.

But one brief and coldly-worded letter with the check enclosed did Prudence receive from Leon all that long winter; yet through the newspapers she learned much of his doings in the Old World.

Through the influence and friendship of his wealthy patron, John Markman, he had made a swift and brilliant success in his profession. A little later, while travelling in France, he discovered a titled relative who made much of him, and for a time he led a gay life in beautiful Paris. At last there came the news of his marriage with the handsome daughter of a wealthy count, and the last faint shadow of hope in Prudence Eldridge's heart faded away.

Two years later, Prudence's father closed his eyes in his last long sleep, and fatherless and motherless, she stood alone in the great wide world with her future in her own hands. Blessed with a goodly inheritance and free to follow the bent of her own sweet will, she yielded to the longing that had secretly consumed her for years; the longing to see something of the world outside of her native place.

With a dear old aunt as companion she starts out on her travels. Spending her winters in the South, her summers in the North and West, and visiting every place of note, she acquires a culture of mind and heart that nothing else could give. Always gifted with her pen; she writes descriptions of her travels with considerable success, and thus finds a congenial work that seems to satisfy the unfulfilled wants of her empty life.

Ten years of summer's bloom and winter's snow have come and gone, and Prudence Eldridge has long since ceased to hear aught of Leon Durrant, and the memory of her one love is buried deep in the dead past. Many a good man has laid his heart at her feet only to hear a gentle "No" fall from her lips. Of late she had taken to spending her winters at the Capital, for dearly she loved its broad streets, its beautiful parks and grand buildings, and never did she tire of wandering through the broad avenues. Though not in the whirl of fashionable society she yet enjoyed glimpses of its gaiety even while leading a life of quiet retirement.

Some undefinable feeling has turned her footsteps somewhat earlier in the fall of the year, toward her winter's quarters at Washington, and late in October finds her settled for the winter.

Intensely patriotic she finds a great fascination in wandering through the beautiful grounds of the National Cemetery at Arlington, and one lovely morning soon after her arrival in Washington we find her in the midst of the beautiful silence of the home of our dead heroes. The air is soft and balmy, the gardens still fresh and green, showing scarcely a touch of Autumn's fingers, while many flowers still bloomed in the warm sunshine.

Wandering through the pleasant walks bordered with flowers, Prudence felt a great wave of pity sweep over her as she gazed at the countless headstones marked "unknown", together with the stately monuments erected in memory of those of higher rank; and a wonder grew up in her mind, if in the great Beyond where dwell the souls of all these slaughtered men, the word "rank" has any significance. Who can tell?

Carried away by her emotions, her eyes blinded with tears, she did not notice a gentleman walking up the path toward her, till he stood directly in her way, and paused for her to move aside; with a hasty movement she brushed away the tears and was about to walk on, when lifting her eyes she looked him full in the face. A strange feeling as though she gazed on one risen from the dead swept over her as her tear-

bright eyes recognized the features of the man before her, and holding out her hand, her pale lips murmured his name:

“Leon Durrant.”

“Yes, Prudence, it is I, or the wreck of what I once was,” he answered bitterly, touching the right sleeve of his coat which alas! hung empty by his side.

“Oh, Leon! What has happened??” cried Prudence gazing at him with horror-stricken eyes, while all the cruel past is swept from her mind in her womanly sympathy for his great loss.

“Only the just punishment for a man’s folly,” said he sadly; then with a swift change of tone and a smile that gives the haggard face something of the old look, he continued:

“Forgive my roughness, Prudence, and tell me how it happens you are here, and looking as if Time had passed you by with never a touch of his rough fingers.”

Smiling a little, Prudence led the way to an empty bench, and sitting down motioned to him to sit beside her; then with a trouble look in her gentle eyes and touching his empty sleeve, she said,

“Tell me first, Leon, what this means?”

With a humility wholly new to Prudence he obeys her, and tells the bitter story of the last ten years of his life, in no wise seeking to shield his own faults or to blame too harshly those of others.

Carried away by his sudden and brilliant success, and the flattery of the titled nobility of Paris, he was led into a rash marriage with the Count’s beautiful daughter, whose vanity and unfaithful conduct led to jealous quarrels and bitter unhappiness. At last in defense of his honor he was forced into a duel with his wife’s lover in which he lost his strong right arm, and with it all hope in his beloved profession. During the weeks of fever and prostration that followed, his wife fled with her lover and while crossing the Atlantic they were both lost at sea.

Back to the home of his youth he came with broken health

and ruined prospects, and learning to write with his left hand, he had found employment as a clerk in the pension office at Washington.

“And this is the end of all my brilliant hopes, Prudence,” he added with a sad smile, “I am an old man before my time, with nothing in life worth living for.”

Prudence’s heart was full of grief and sympathy as she listened to his wretched story; then in quiet tones she told him of her life of travel and study, her writing and her peaceful enjoyment of its cultivation. Looking into the calm depths of those gentle eyes Leon Durrant groaned in spirit at his own short-sighted folly, while the consciousness that here was a woman who would have been a faithful helpmeet throughout all his life, pure and steadfast, loving and tender, filled his soul with despair. Suddenly a new thought passes swiftly through his mind and he bends over her eagerly.

“But, Prudence, you have never married, why is it?”

For an instant she did not answer and a faint pink stole into her cheeks, then lifting her honest blue eyes to his face she said softly,

“I had no heart to give.”

“Prue, Prue,” cried Leon, her words rousing a fierce hope in his heart, “do not trifle with me, I beseech you.”

“I could not if I would, Leon,” she answered, her sweet lips trembling slightly.

“But it cannot be that you still care for me in the old way, Prue, that, oh! dare I say it, dear, your love is still the same?”

“Always the same, Leon,” she answered bravely, though the crimson dyed her face. With a swift movement he knelt on the ground before her and burying his face in the fold of her dress he muttered hoarsely,

“My darling, my darling, I am not worthy of so great a love.”

“Hush, dear,” said Prudence, “it could not be otherwise, for the love of every true woman once given, is given for all time.”

HER EASTER BONNET.

“What did ye say ye wanted it for?” asked Pliny Badger, reluctantly unrolling his old leather wallet, and fingering a few soiled bills with a thoughtful air; “ye know I aint got no money to fool away on fol-de-rols.”

A slight flush crept into his wife's cheeks. “T'aint often I ask for money, Pliny, that ye need to speak so,” answered she a little sharply, “an' as for fol-de-rols I don't just know what ye mean by 'em.”

“Oh! women's foolishness generally; ribbons an' laces, an' make-believe posies, and sich like,” said Pliny still counting over his money earnestly.

“Women's foolishness!” repeated Melissa indignantly, “I guess men's foolishness costs about as much as most women's an' they don't amount to nothin' but smoke either.”

“Well, well, Melissa, don't go to harpin' on that string,” cried Pliny, impatiently, “smokin' aint the worst thing a man can do.”

“An' how much money have I spent on ribbons and posies this twenty years, Pliny Badger?” continued Melissa, excitedly. “I aint had a bran'-new bonnet for the last five years. Just because I've turned an' twisted an' made over my own bonnets year after year, dyeing my ribbons an' flowers, an' sewing over the straw, I suppose ye think I'm goin' to keep right on doin' of it forever an' a day after. But I aint a-goin' to, Pliny, any longer. I'm a-goin to have a bran'-new bonnet this spring, an' I'm a-goin to get it early so 's to wear it to church on Easter Sunday.”

“So ye shall, so ye shall, Melissa,” said Pliny hastily, looking alarmed at the rising storm. “Here's two dollars to

throw away on that bonnet, an' you just go down to the village an' buy the cutest thing ye can find in Miss Crockett's store."

For a moment Melissa looked at the torn bill in her husband's hand in silence, then with her voice trembling with its weight of scorn, she burst out:

"Two dollars! What kind of a bonnet do ye think I can buy with that?" said she indignantly.

Pliny's face lengthened.

"Sho! Melissa, how much do ye want, anyhow?" said he slowly.

"I want ten dollars, Pliny Badger," answered Melissa firmly.

"Phew!" whistled Pliny, "ye must be crazy, Melissa, to think o' spendin' ten dollars jest for a bonnet."

"The minister's wife paid twenty for hers last fall," answered Melissa.

"That's another thing, Melissa. La! if I was a-gettin' a salary of five or six hundred a year, to say nothin' o' donation parties an' funerals thrown in, ye might think on 't," answered Pliny.

"Well, we aint so 'mazin' poor, but we can afford to be a little extravagant once in a while, suppose ye don't," said his wife. "Ye didn't think nothin' 'bout bein' poor at 'lection time when ye put up ten dollars with Ezra Sawin, a-bettin' who'd be the next President."

"That's all right, Melissa, long's I won the bet," said Pliny with a grin.

"But I don't believe Ezra 's paid ye the money or ever will," said Melissa, with a sharp look at her husband's face.

Pliny looked a little foolish.

"Yes, he will, I've got his note for 't, Melissa, an' Ezra Sawin 's man o' his word, if he is a bit long winded."

"You ought to both on ye be ashamed o' makin' bets, anyhow, an' you a church member too, Pliny," said Melissa, severely.

"T'aint exactly orthodox I don't suppose," said Pliny,

“an’ ’t aint often I do sich a thing, but I tell ye what, Melissa, last election was enough to stir up the dander in every man that had any fight in him. An’ when Ezra Sawin turned Bryanite an’ swore he’d be our next President, I jest said ‘put up yer money, Ezra.’ ”

“An’ then he gave ye his note instead,” said Melissa, “an’ that ’s all the good it ’ll ever do ye. But as long as ye didn’t lose nothin’ ye are well out on ’t, Pliny, and ye can well afford to buy me a bran’-new bonnet for Easter,” concluded she triumphantly.

Pliny Badger looked serious.

“I don’t see jest how I’m a goin’ to spare that much for ye, Melissa,” said he slowly. “It ’s most seedin’ time, ye know, an’ ready money’s hard to get hold on, an’ I need all I’ve got, an’ more too. But I’ll tell ye what, Melissa, suppose you take this note an’ see what you can do to make Ezra Sawin turn it into cash.”

“I won’t have nothin’ to do with that horrid note,” cried Melissa, thrusting back the offered paper into her husband’s hand. “I want the money or nothing.”

“All right, Melissa, only it ’ll have to be that note or nothin’,” said Pliny, throwing the note on the table and leaving the room.

For a while, Melissa sat looking at the bit of soiled paper. Anger, disappointment and chagrin passed over her face in rapid succession. At last she took up the note and read it carefully:

“If McKinley is elected President of the United States, I agree to pay to Pliny Badger the sum of ten dollars, or its equivalent. Signed, EZRA SAWIN.

Witnessed by, DORCAS SAWIN.”

As she read the last clause of this very original note of hand, Melissa threw it down impatiently.

“Just as I expected. Ezra Sawin is too sharp for Pliny every time he has any kind o’ dealin’s with him. Ezra never meant to pay him a cent in money whichever way the election turned out. Or its equivalent! humph! Ezra Sawin is about

as mean a man as there is in this part of the country. An' Dorcas never 'd signed the note, either, if she'd thought the money would ever have to be paid. Oh! I know 'em both.'" Melissa jumped up and walked the floor in her excitement.

"Dear me, I did so want a bran'-new bonnet this spring. I don't seem to have nothin' that's worth a-fixin' up this time. I 've dyed my old ribbons over an' over till they are as stiff as paper an' crackle like shavin's. An' those old violets look more like blackberries than violets, they are so black and crumpled. Seems if the more a woman saves an' pinches the more she may, an' a man sort o' expects it of her. An' then if she complains he tells her she looks just as young an' pretty in the old duds as if they was new.'" Melissa glanced in the mirror over the kitchen sink, as she paused in her march about the room. It was a fresh comely face the glass reflected, with smooth skin, glossy, dark hair, and eyes which her flash of temper had fired till they snapped and glowed with unusual brilliancy. Her expression hardened a little, as she viewed her own well preserved charms.

"Pliny Badger just makes me tired with his everlastin' talk about 'handsome is as handsome does,' an' that when a woman gets past forty she ought to stop a-followin' the fashions an' prinkin'. But I've allus noticed that the women the men are the most polite to, are the ones who are rigged out to kill, an' frizzled down to the eyebrows. A woman is never too old to want to look well, accordin' to my idea, or to want new clothes. Even old Mother Earth changes the fashion of her garment every season," muttered Melissa, waxing poetical as she threw open the door to let in the warm spring sunshine. The fields and meadows were covered with the tender green of young grass and early wildflowers. The brooks sparkled in the golden sunlight; the birds sang gaily in the budding treetops, and over all bent a sky blue and cloudless.

Only for a moment did she gaze upon that springtime loveliness, for Melissa Badger was too busy and practical a woman to yield very long to a sentimental emotion. Carefully refold-

ing Ezra Sawin's note of hand, she put it away and went about her daily tasks in her usual brisk manner.

It wanted but two weeks to Easter, and still Melissa was no nearer the goal of her ambition in regard to that new bonnet. Not a word had been spoken between them on the subject, and man-like, Pliny had forgotten entirely his wife's request. For the last time Melissa had looked over her stock of millinery and decided that it was impossible to make further use of it, and that the new bonnet must be forthcoming. But how, when, or where, was an unsettled question.

Again and again did the thought of Ezra's note come to her mind, as a possible solving of this problem. But the hopelessness of the "equivalent" being anything she could turn into money had disheartened her. At last, however, there seemed to be no other way of obtaining the desired sum at the time needed, and she determined to make the trial.

The golden sunshine of a lovely spring morning flooded the world, as Ezra Sawin turned over the rich, brown earth in his potato patch, preparatory to his early planting. Suddenly, the sound of wheels attracted his attention, and pausing in his work he saw a brisk little colt drawing a democratic wagon, and driven by a woman, coming along the road. In spite of shabby shawl and faded bonnet, Melissa was a pleasant sight to any man, and Ezra Sawin smiled broadly, as he walked out to the approaching team.

"Why, good mornin,' Mrs Badger, ye are out early, aint ye? Dorcas 'll be 'mazin' glad to see ye," said he cordially, as the colt stopped before him.

"I haven't come a-callin' today, Mr. Sawin," answered Melissa, briskly. "It's a little matter of business to do with you, I'm here for."

"Sho! ye don't say," answered Ezra, laughing a little uneasily. "What might it be now?"

Melissa drew from her pocket a slip of folded paper, which looked suspiciously familiar to the old farmer.

"You recognize this note, don't ye, Mr. Sawin?" said Melissa, holding out the paper. "It's the one you gave Pliny at

election time last fall. You see, Pliny is a little short of ready money just now, an' he told me I might collect this note from you."

Ezra's face grew long and sober.

"La! Mrs. Badger, I didn't suppose Pliny 'd take that 'ere note seriously. 'T was all done in sort o' fun, ye know," said he, slowly.

Melissa's eyes snapped.

"Oh! it was, was it, Mr. Sawin?" cried she, quickly. "But, suppose Pliny had lost; what then?"

"Why, that would 'a' been his lookout, o' course," said Ezra, with a sly look. "You see, Mrs. Badger, we was both on us excited over the election, or we'd never 'a' done sich a foolish thing as to bet. Why, it was most unchristian, an' I've been 'shamed on 't ever since."

"That's neither here nor there, Mr. Sawin. What's done can't be undone, an' ye know mighty well that if Pliny had 'a' lost that bet you would 'a' had your money straight. For my husband is an honorable man, Ezra Sawin, an' pays his bills, always," said Melissa, sternly.

Ezra coughed slightly.

"Well, well, Mrs. Badger, I don't want any hard feelin's over that 'ere paper, but really, I can't let ye have no money on't, sure," said he, slowly.

"Then I must have its equivalent," said Melissa, her voice hardening, "that's what the paper said, 'ten dollars or its equivalent.'"

Ezra pulled a bit of grass and chewed on it meditatively.

"There's potatoes an' apples ye might have," said he, "we had a lot left over from last year."

"So did we," snapped Melissa, shortly.

"There aint nothin' else as I know on, ye'd want, unless it's a pig," continued Ezra, grinning a little.

Melissa looked furious a moment, then cooling a little she said, quickly:

"Let me see the pigs."

"All right, Mrs. Badger, ye can see 'em, sure," said Ezra, laughing as if it was a good joke, "but I guess ye'll want somethin' 'sides a pig."

Jumping out of the wagon and securely fastening the restless colt, Melissa followed the farmer around the house to the pig pen. A loud squealing greeted their approach.

"There, Mrs. Badger, aint they beauties?" cried Ezra. "Those half grown ones are about ready to kill."

"What are they worth?" asked Melissa.

"Well, they ought to bring five dollars apiece," said Ezra, off his guard.

"I'll take the two," said Melissa.

"Sho! Mrs. Badger, ye must be foolin'," cried Ezra, surprised. "Them pigs are the best o' the whole lot."

"So much the better for me," said Melissa firmly. If those two pigs are worth ten dollars, that just cancels the note, and I'll take 'em.

Expostulations and arguments were of no avail, and after a lively skirmish the two squealing porkers were tied in the back of the democrat wagon. Ezra Sawin knew full well that this was not the proper way to send the pigs to market; but thinking Melissa was going no further than her husband's farm, he cared nothing for that. With that unfortunate note in his hand, he watched the team out of sight, muttering wrathfully to himself as he went back to his work in the potato patch.

Not being used to carrying so noisy a load, the colt grew more and more restless at the squealing of the pigs till he almost seemed to fly over the moist country road. Faster and faster he went, his excitement increasing till Melissa could hold him in no longer. With one desperate effort she rose to her feet and pulled on the lines. Plunging forward the frightened colt threw her to the ground, while the squealing pigs went flying after her.

Considerably bruised, but not seriously hurt, Melissa picked herself up, only to see her colt flying toward the village at lightning speed, and the pigs rolling in the mud beside the

road. As she was but a short distance from her destination, she continued on her way, driving her pigs before her. Never did two pigs rush along in so wild a fashion. First on one side of the road, and then the other, till Melissa grew nearly frantic in her efforts to urge them on. Pedestrians and travelers gazed curiously at the disheveled looking woman driving two pigs to market, but so strangely did Melissa seem during this adventure that no one recognized her.

On she went, the pigs leading her a wild dance all over the road, till by some strange good luck they both rushed into the yard which belonged to the butcher, John Bixby. With a groan of relief, Melissa followed after, greeting the butcher by crying out hysterically:

“Oh! Mr. Bixby, won’t you please buy these two pigs?”

“For goodness sakes, Mrs. Badger, what has happened to ye? You are all mud, an’ your dress is torn.”

“Yes, yes, I know,” cried Melissa wildly. “The colt threw me an’ then run away, but do please buy these pigs, Mr. Bixby, won’t you? I’ve had such a time in getting them here.”

The good-natured butcher looked at the excited woman a moment in silence, then closing the gate to prevent the escape of those mischievous pigs, he said quietly:

“Now, Mrs. Badger, just you come right in the house an’ sit with Mrs. Bixby awhile, an’ tell us all about it while you get rested, an’ then I’ll see about the pigs.”

Melissa was but too glad to do as she was bid, and after pledging them both to secrecy, she told them the story of Pliny’s bet with Ezra Sawin and its result. With roars of laughter the jolly butcher listened to her tale, and when she had finished he thrust his hand in his pocket, and drawing out a well-filled wallet he extracted two five-dollar bills, saying, as he held them toward her:

“There! Mrs. Badger, if ever a woman earned her Easter bonnet, you have, an’ I’ll take the pigs, sure.”

A little later the skittish colt was captured without much damage being done either to himself or the wagon; and Melissa drove homeward with a feeling of triumph, even though con-

siderably tired with her adventures. Not a word did she say to Pliny of what had befallen her, and the subject of the new bonnet was not again discussed between them.

Easter morning dawned bright and clear, and all the earth put on her springtime garments. Blithely the church bells rang out their notes of joy and praise. The bluebird and the robin sang loudly in the leafing trees, and the babbling brooks murmured a low refrain. The air was warm and balmy, and the sunshine lay in golden patches on the grass in front of the Badger farmhouse, as Pliny led out the colt hitched to a shining buggy. Not until early that very morning had he thought of its being Easter Sunday. A slight feeling of uneasiness came over him as he remembered his wife's request for a new bonnet, and vaguely he wished that he had given it more thought. Suddenly the door opened and out stepped Melissa, looking, as Pliny said ever after, "Just like a picture." The saying that "fine feathers make fine birds" must be a true one, for while Melissa, even in her shabby clothes was a woman fair to look upon, yet clad in her fresh, new garments, she seemed in the eyes of her husband as gorgeous as a bird of paradise. A neat tailor-made suit of gray cloth, with jacket to match, and a dainty black straw bonnet trimmed with tasty bows of velvet ribbon and pink roses, was the cause of this transformation in Melissa.

"Well! I snum," muttered Pliny, as he helped his wife into the bnggy. Then, as they drove out of the dooryard, he said with an admiring glance at her rosy, smiling face:

"How on earth did you do it, Melissa?"

"I sold the pigs, Pliny," answered she demurely.

"What pigs?" said he.

"Why, Ezra Sawin's pigs, to be sure," answered Melissa, laughing.

"You don't mean to say——" burst out Pliny, a light beginning to dawn upon him.

"Yes, I do, Pliny," interrupted his wife gaily. "Now, just look out for that colt, while I tell you all about it."

As she finished her story, Pliny joined in her laugh over her adventures and Ezra Sawin's discomfiture.

"Melissa, you are the smartest woman in all New England," said he earnestly. "An' accordin' to my idea, the handsomest, too."

With these words he bent over and gave his wife a loud kiss, which so startled the colt that he flew over the road faster than ever.

The little village church was thronged with worshippers, as Pliny Badger and his wife walked decorously up the aisle. The scent of lilies filled the air, and as Melissa breathed in their fragrance, there came to her a sweet consciousness of spring-time gladness together with the pleasant satisfaction of that brand'new Easter bonnet.

THE FUTURE.—A Sonnet.

Thou fathomless book of mysteries dark and deep,
Where, closely bound and locked within thy breast,
Are joys and sorrows, all this life's behest,
Where caught and held in chains of dreamless sleep,
The untold tales their silent councils keep;
Would I be happier, feel myself more blest,
If from thy face the mystic veil was wrest?
Would I have cause for smiles, or tears to weep?
No answer comes; the future years are bound
To hold their peace, and meet our prayers and tears
With sternest, grimmest silence, most profound,
And pay no heed to hopes, or anxious fears;
But with the changeless course of human fate,
Leaves naught for us to do but trust and wait.

THE STORY OF A WISH-BONE.

It was Thanksgiving day in the fall of '63. The shadow of the great tragedy that was being enacted in the South, cast its gloom over the whole country. In many households the "vacant chair" was its most conspicuous object, and heart-ache and sad forebodings marred the serenity of the home life. The old-time joyous anticipation of Thanksgiving day, with its bustle of preparation, and its renewal of family ties, was wanting. Yet custom prevailed, and though hearts were heavy, and dear ones were missing, the annual thanksgiving offering of prayer and praise was sent to Him, who, knowing the ultimate victory of that fierce struggle, suffered the sacrifice to be.

Though the day was bitter cold, the air was clear, and the glorious sunshine flooded the world with brilliant light, and flung its rays around a slight, girlish figure, standing in the open doorway of a Vermont farmhouse.

With her hand shading her eyes, the girl glanced eagerly down the long country road, while the combine odors of roasting turkey, mince pies, and Indian pudding rushed through the open door into the crisp, November air. The sound of horses's hoofs upon the frozen ground brought a swift color to her cheeks, and with one sharp glance in its direction, she softly closed the door and stepped back into the warm kitchen.

"Is he coming, Dorothy?" said Mrs. Howard, glancing at her daughter's flushed cheeks and brightened eyes, while a faint smile curved her own grave lips.

Dorothy nodded gaily, as she flew about the room, putting the finishing touches to the nearly prepared dinner-table. Suddenly the door was flung open, and a tall, manly-looking fellow, in a soldier's uniform, stepped inside.

"I have come for one good square meal, Mrs. Howard, be-

fore I go down South to whip the rebels," said he with forced gaiety, though his eyes looked anxiously into Dorothy's face, from which the color had faded as he spoke.

"You—you are going to the war?" stammered she slowly.

Roger Whitney crossed the room, and took the girl's trembling fingers in his own.

"Dorothy, my country needs me. Will you not bid me 'God speed?' " said he earnestly.

With childish force the girl wrenched herself from his clasp, and covered her face.

"It is too cruel, too cruel," she sobbed bitterly.

"Hush! Dorothy! Have you forgotten that you are a soldier's daughter?" said Mrs. Howard a little sternly.

"No, mother, nor that you are a soldier's widow," answered Dorothy quickly, "and now to give up Roger, too, just as we—as we—" her voice broke, and she paused.

A crimson flush dyed the young man's face, and boyishly, he threw himself on his knees beside her.

"Sweetheart, I know what you would say, and 't is just as hard for me as it is for you. Yet it would be the act of a coward to remain at home when my country calls me. And I must go."

Thus it came about that the Thanksgiving dinner, which Dorothy had helped to prepare with such happy anticipations, was eaten with heavy hearts, and saddened faces. Bravely did Roger strive to dispel the gloom with his merry jokes, and hopeful talk of a speedy return, and when the turkey's wish-bone fell to his share, he held it up with a gay laugh.

"Here 's good luck, Dorothy! Come, let us make a wish," said he, and with a sad little smile the girl complied.

Snap! and away flew the top of the brittle bone, leaving an equal portion in the fingers of each.

"Does that mean that we have both lost or won?" asked Roger, holding firmly to the bit in his hand.

"Lost, I think," said Dorothy.

"I'll not believe it," cried Roger. "See! both pieces measure exactly the same, which means that we will both have our

wish. And to prove it is so, let us keep the pieces till we meet again," and opening a small notebook, he placed between its covers the broken wishbone.

"Till we meet again!" Ah, how many times in the long, long months of weary waiting that followed, did these words come back to Dorothy, and sorrowfully her heart cried out, "Shall we ever meet again?"

In these days of peace and prosperity, when the story of the great Rebellion is such an old, old tale, when the graves of heroes are covered by the grasses of many seasons, and Southern battlefields have become parks and pleasure-grounds, how little does one realize the heartache and misery of that awful time! In thousands of broken homes were mothers, wives and daughters, who kept lonely vigils for dear ones who never came, and Mrs. Howard and Dorothy shared in this watching and waiting. For a short time Roger's cheerful, hopeful letters comforted a little the lonely women, then suddenly they ceased, and a long silence fell between them.

The wheel of time rolled onward. The great struggle was over, and right prevailed. The cry of "victory" rang loudly throughout the land, yet alas! was echoed but faintly in the rebellious heart of Dorothy Howard. To her youthful imagination, the sacrifice of her father and her lover seemed greater than the cause, and while grateful for her country's victory, a tinge of bitterness was mingled with her joy. Hopeless of Roger's return, she enshrined his image in her heart, and took up the burden of her daily life as best she could. As teacher of a little district school in the community in which she was born and brought up, her life flowed on quietly, and uneventfully, till ten long years had passed into oblivion, and one day Dorothy awoke to find herself motherless. With the last tie severed which bound her to her childhood's home, she remembered a promise once made to an aunt living in Boston, that should she ever be left alone she would come to her. In the complete change of environment which followed, Dorothy Howard learned to know the true inwardness of living.

At twenty-eight, the impulsive, tender-hearted little country

girl had developed into a beautiful woman, with a calm face and gentle manners. And amid the refinements and culture of her new home, she found the mental food which satisfied her. Loyal to the memory of her soldier lover, none had come to fill his place in her heart, and the days and the weeks moved onward. Another ten years have slipped away, and Dorothy Howard is Dorothy Howard still.

"I believe that I am really growing old!" exclaimed she to herself one morning, as she spied the gleam of a white hair amid her dark brown braids.

Outside a street organ began layin, "Twenty years ago!" and with its quaint melody filling her ears, the gates of memory swung backward. Seating herself at her desk, she took from an inner drawer a little box. A small piece of a turkey's wishbone fell from it as she pulled off the cover, while a voice seemed to breathe in her ear, "Till we meet again! Till we meet again!"

Only a short time did Dorothy yield to these old-time memories, for present duties recalled her to herself. With a gentle sigh, she pushed aside the little box, and drawing toward her paper, she began to write. For an hour her pen flew swiftly, then gathering up the accumulated sheets, she enclosed them in an envelope which she directed to a prominent publishing house in the city.

The next day the busy editor of the Boston News was looking over his morning's mail. Tearing open an envelope directed in a small feminine hand, he glanced hastily through its contents, till his eye at last read the name of the writer at the bottom of the last page, "Dorothy Howard."

It was a brief, well written article on home charities, a subject in which Dorothy had become greatly interested. Something in the article, or the writer's name, seemed to hold the busy editor's gaze, for several moments passed before he laid down the manuscript.

Then again taking the envelope in his hand, he scrutinized sharply the writing. A small substance in one corner, attracted his notice, and giving the envelope a shake, there fell

upon his desk a piece of a turkey's wish-bone. Now what there was in this innocent bit of bone that was so alarming, a stranger would never guess, but if the gray-haired editor of the News had seen a ghost, he could not have looked more startled. For a brief space he stared earnestly at the wish-bone, then seizing a pen, he wrote swiftly the following note:

TO DOROTHY HOWARD,

Columbus Ave., Boston, Mass.

Dear Madam:—Will you please call at the editorial room of the Boston News, at your earliest convenience, and oblige,

Yours respectfully,

EDITOR, "Boston News."

Twenty-four hours later, the door of the News office was pushed gently open.

The editor glanced up eagerly, and as his eyes rested upon the face of this woman, he knew that the Dorothy Howard of his youth stood before him.

"Good morning! Madam, pray be seated," said he with an effort.

But Dorothy stood as if rooted to the spot. In spite of the gray hair and mustache, the time-marred face looked strangely familiar to her, and with the sound of his voice a flood of memories swept over her.

"You are—you are not——" she began.

A glad light flashed over the man's face.

"Yes, Dorothy, you are right. I am Roger Whitney," said he, holding out his hand.

Dorothy did not move.

"We thought you were killed," said she, slowly. "Why did you not come back to us, or write?"

"Forgive me, Dorothy, I did wrong not to have written you the truth. But I dared not come back to you like this." As he spoke he swung around in his revolving chair and faced her.

The light of a great compassion filled Dorothy's eyes when she saw that both legs were missing below the knees. Roger watched her face with a sad smile.

"You see I am but half a man, Dorothy," said he, "and I had no right to expect you to keep your promise."

With a tender impulse, that would not be checked, Dorothy moved swiftly to his side, and laying her hand on his shoulder, she said softly:

"It would have made no difference, Roger."

Instantly the man's fingers covered her own.

"Is it too late now, Dorothy?" he questioned quickly.

The noisy street cars, the tramping of feet in the passageway, and the loud ticking of the office clock, nearly deadened that softly whispered "No!" yet Roger heard it, and was satisfied.

The "No Admittance" card, that hung for the next hour upon the outer door of the editorial sanctum, proved indeed a guardian angel to the reunited lovers, for how could the happenings of twenty years be talked over in less time?

"You see, Dorothy, when I found this bit of wish-bone, I knew it was you," said Roger, taking it up from his desk with tender fingers.

"Why! where did you find it?" said she in surprise.

"In the article you sent me on Home Charities," said Roger, smiling.

Dorothy blushed.

"I had been thinking of old times that morning, and had taken it from the little box where I had kept it so many years. It must have gotten into my paper by mistake," said she.

"No," said Roger, gravely, "fate sent it to me, and fate makes no mistakes." Then from his pocketbook he took the other half of that wish-bone, and placing them side by side, he added: "And my wish has come true."

"So has mine," answered Dorothy, sweetly.

LUCINDA'S CHRISTMAS VISION.

“I wonder if I’ll have plush furniture and a velvet carpet in Heaven!” muttered Lucinda Holden, as she plied the broom energetically to the faded rag carpet on the floor of the best room in the old farmhouse. “Some folks believe you’ll get the thing you’ve wanted most on earth, and land knows I’ve just hungered and thirsted for beautiful furniture, and a carpet your feet ’ll sink way down in as you walk on’t, ever since I kept house. Jotham says what’s good enough for his mother ’s good enough for me, so rag carpets and cane bot-tomed chairs have been my lot for the past twenty years. I suppose I’m wicked and rebellious to complain, long’s I have enough to eat and a roof over my head; but somehow it takes more’n just that to make one satisfied with life. Suppose it does keep the breath in these perishin’ bodies of ourn, seems to me the soul needs somethin’ to keep it a-goin’, too, and beautiful things to look at, an’ to feel on an’ to use every day, too, is the kind of food some souls just about starve for.” Lucinda paused to catch her breath, and to shake a large braided mat out the front door. A wistful look was in the woman’s eyes as they glanced quickly over the glorious winter landscape spread out before her.

“The Lord favors beauty, too,” continued she, “ or He wouldn’t ’a’ made this earth so lovely to look at, an’ He didn’t believe in usin’ old things till one gets sick an’ tired of the sight on ’em, either. For four times a year He just strips the whole earth of its worn-out finery, an’ rigs her up in new, an’ always more beautiful than the last. Goodness knows what I’d do if I couldn’t feast my eyes on the Lord’s handiwork. Just the same, ’t would be mighty soul-satisfying when one’s shut up in the house a good part of the time, to look at somethin’ besides mother Holden’s faded rag carpets an’ patch-work bed-quilts.”

“Hello! Mis’ Holden,” called out a voice, as she paused in her soliloquy and was about to close the door. “Here’s a letter for ye. Been down to the village, an’ long’s I was a-goin’ by, thought I’d bring it to ye.”

“Much obliged, Mr. Thompson,” answered Lucinda, taking the letter from the man’s outstretched hand. “How’s Mis’ Thompson’s rheumatis’?”

“Fair to middlin’, fair to middlin’, Mis’ Holden,” answered the man, stamping about in the snow, and swinging his arms back and forth for warmth. “Jotham pretty smart this winter?”

“Pretty fair, Mr. Thompson. Get a little spleeny once in a while, but nothin’ to speak on,” said Lucinda, impatiently fingering the letter in her hand.

“Haint got no bad news, have ye?” questioned the man curiously.

“I haven’t read my letter, yet, Mr. Thompson,” answered Lucinda with dignity.

“Sho! now, so ye haint,” said he, with a good-natured grin. “Well, I’ll go along an’ gin ye a chance,” and swinging about he tramped off through the snow with a jolly whistle.

Hastening into the house, Lucinda piled fresh logs on the kitchen fireplace, and, seating herself in a comfortable, old-fashioned rocker, tore open her letter.

“New York, Dec.—, 18—.

“Dear Cousin Lucinda (she read aloud):—I am coming to the wilds of Vermont to spend Christmas with you and Jotham. So kill the fatted calf (that is the old hen-turkey), make some of those good, old-fashioned pumpkin pies, and let us make merry as we did when we were children and I spent my summers with you at the dear, old farm. To tell the truth, dear coz, I’m tired of fuss and feathers, fashion and frivolity, and long for the simplicity of country life, and the sight of your dear, good face. So with this hope to sustain me till I realize my desire, I’ll say “Au revoir.”

“Your affectionate cousin,

“MILDRED ROBERTS.”

“Hum!” muttered Lucinda, a little dryly as she folded her letter and gazed musingly into the fire, “Milly must be either bilious or in love to want to leave her beautiful home and come up here in the dead o’ winter. Seems sort o’ queer now ’t I think on ’t that she never married, an’ she’s a good deal past thirty, too. Well, she’s had plenty o’ money, and a fine house filled with beautiful things, all her life, an’ perhaps she’s just as well without a husband to tell her when to buy new carpets an’ things;” an odd smile crept around Lucinda’s mouth as she paused.

The sound of sleigh-bells aroused her from her reverie, and springing up she hastened to the door, just as a stylish looking woman sprang from the sleigh and came swiftly toward the house.

“Here I am, cousin Lucy, three weeks ahead of time!” cried she, embracing Lucinda affectionately. “I just couldn’t wait, after I had decided to come, so followed my letter immediately. Oh! how good it seems to see the dear old farm again.” Swift tears sprang to Mildred’s eyes as she spoke.

Lucinda watched her cousin gravely.

“I’m real glad to see you, Milly, though I’m sort o’ surprised you should ’a’ wanted to come to this dreary place in the winter, an’ leave your gay city.”

“I’m tired of its gaiety, Lucy, fearfully tired,” answered Mildred, wearily.

“Is it your liver or your heart, Milly?” said Lucinda, with a sharp look into her cousin’s eyes.

Mildred colored, though she glanced up with a merry laugh.

“A little of both, perhaps, Lucy,” said she with a slight catch in her voice.

“I kind of thought so,” said Lucinda, quietly.

There was a strong resemblance between the two cousins, both having the same fine, brown eyes, dark wavy hair, and the same cast of features. Yet the environment of each had made them seem like creatures of different worlds.

Mildred Roberts’s straight figure, with its graceful curves, was set off by her rich and fashionable travelling dress. While

her becomingly arranged hair, smooth, round cheeks, and clear eyes gave her a youthful, girlish look, which belied her years. Lucinda Holden was but five years older than her cousin Milly, yet she looked fifteen. Her figure was thin and shrunken, with a slight stoop of the shoulders. Silver threads had made their home among those dark-brown tresses, and her eyes had a tired, yearning look, that spoke of the soul hunger within. Mildred's sharp eyes followed her about, and she thought to herself with a sudden pang:

"How old cousin Lucinda has grown!"

It was but a few days later that something happened in that quiet household. Something so unusual, that Jotham Holden's slow wits could hardly grasp the situation.

Lucinda was down sick with a fever. With flushed cheeks and brilliant eyes, she tossed restlessly upon her pillow, muttering incoherently of "Velvet carpets, plush chairs, the Heavenly city, and the Lord's handiwork."

Such a jumble of words, with no sense nor meaning for Milly or Jotham! With all the speed he was capable of, Jotham Holden started for the doctor, while Milly installed herself as her cousin's nurse. As she watched eagerly for the doctor's arrival, she was astonished to see, instead of the usual country practitioner in his old-fashioned turnout, a stylish-looking sleigh pause before the house, and a tall, handsome man of middle age walk briskly up to the door.

Something strangely familiar in the man's looks caused Mildred's heart to throb wildly, as she opened the door. Lifting his hat the man's eyes met her own, and the recognition was mutual. With somewhat heightened color, he held out his hand, saying:

"This is a surprise, indeed, Miss Roberts, to meet you in this out-of-the-way place after so many years. How does it happen?"

"Mrs. Holden is my cousin, and I have come to spend Christmas with her, Dr. Alan," answered Mildred, shaking hands gravely. "And what brings you to this part of the world; I thought you had gone abroad?"

“Force of circumstances causes many changes in one’s plans, Miss Roberts, and the death of Dr. Whitney, who was an uncle of mine, was the primary cause of my coming to this little country town, where, for the present, I seem to be the only practicing physician,” answered he. Then with a soft change of tone, he added: “Can I see my patient now?”

In spite of her anxiety for her cousin, Mildred’s mind was in a tumult of emotion at this unexpected revival of a past in which this man was the principal figure. A past that had been both bitter and sweet. Sweet with the tenderness of a deeper love than her proud heart would acknowledge. Bitter, because of that fatal mistake which had so nearly wrecked her life’s happiness. Could it be that fate was to give her one more chance?

Beside Lucinda’s sick bed the two met daily, and with untiring skill and devotion started anew the life current in that tired frame.

Never, in the days of her youth and belledom, when surrounded by wealth, the center of an admiring throng, had Milly seemed so adorably sweet and womanly, in the eyes of Dr. Howard Alan, as she did while ministering to her sick cousin. And the woman’s heart passed unreservedly into the keeping of this grave-eyed physician, as she worked by his side through those anxious days. So they both knew that the mistakes of the past were forgotten, while the future held for them a joy unspeakable.

“I’ve had such a strange dream, Milly,” said Lucinda, a few days after the fever had left her. “I thought I had gone to Heaven to spend Christmas with the Lord. It was such a beautiful city, I just walked along admiring everything. Suddenly I came to a grand mansion, with a shining doorplate on the front of it, an’ feelin’ sort o’ curious I stopped to see who lived there. An’ there, in gold letters, was my own name, ‘Lucinda Holden.’ Almost as if someone was pushin’ me, I walked straight into the house.”

“O Milly! I never’ll forget how lovely it was. Such soft, velvet carpets; your feet went down deep at every step. Such

beautiful chairs, all cushioned with plush an' shining silks. An' books an' flowers an' pictures everywhere. I just looked an' looked, till my eyes fairly ached with the glory of it. Then, all at once, I saw someone standin' near me. So kind an' gentle, so tender an' sweet was that face, Milly, I knew it was the Lord. I sank down upon my knees before Him, an' cried:

" 'It is so beautiful here, dear Lord, let me stay.' "

"With a smile so sad an' sweet that it pierced me through an' through, He answered, softly: 'Not yet,'—an' then I awoke."

The tears were running swiftly down Lucinda's cheeks, though her pale lips tried to smile as she added, quaintly:

"So you see, Milly, it's sort of hard to have to come back to mother Holden's rag carpets again."

A great flood of compassion filled Mildred's heart, as her cousin's soul lay bare before her. Oh! how blind she had been! with a silent kiss, she passed swiftly from the room and out into the kitchen, where Jotham sat whittling a stick before the fire.

"Jotham Holden, you 've very nearly starved that wife of yours to death!" said she, in a fierce whisper.

"Not as I knowed on, cousin Milly. There's always been plenty o' victuals in my house," answered Jotham, with dignity.

"Victuals, victuals!" sniffed Milly, scornfully. "Oh, yes, victuals to feed her body, I know. But what is there in this great empty barn of a house to feed a beauty-loving soul like Lucinda?"

Jotham's eyes followed the sweep of Milly's arm, as she waved it tragically about, then coming back to her excited face, he said, slowly:

"So ye think it 's Lucy's soul I've starved, do ye. Well, I've thought for some time there was somethin' the matter with Lucinda's in'ards, but I never supposed 't was a starved soul. Now what's the prescription for 't, cousin Milly?"

Mildred's eyes flashed.

“New wall paper, fresh paint and whitewash; then new carpets, new furniture, plenty of books, pictures and flowers,” said she, breathlessly.

Jotham whistled, softly.

“Guess you think money ’s a-plenty round these parts, cousin Milly,” said he.

“But I’ve got more than I need, Jotham, and I’d willingly share——” eagerly began Mildred, when Jotham interrupted her.

“Oh! I aint so poor, cousin Milly, that I need charity yet. So, if your prescription ’s the cure for what’s ailin’ Lucy, I don’t know but we’d better try it,” said he, quietly, going on with his whittling.

On Christmas day Lucinda was to leave her room for the first time. With a happy, excited face, Milly dressed her cousin in the dainty, new wrapper she had made for her.

“How you have chirked up lately, cousin Milly!” said Lucinda, watching her curiously. Nussin’ seems to agree with ye. Guess you an’ Dr. Alan ’d better go into partnership.”

Mildred blushed, and laughed softly.

“That’s just what we are going to do, Lucy,” said she.

“Hum!” said Lucinda, dryly, “so he’s the man, is he?”

“Yes, dear coz, he ’s the man,” answered Milly, gaily.

A little later, as Jotham Holden lifted his wife’s slight figure in his strong arms and carried her into the sitting-room, it seemed to Lucinda’s dazzled eyes that her dream had come true. Dainty colored paper covered the walls. A rich, soft carpet was on the floor, and a comfortable couch, bright and luxuriant; while easy chairs were scattered about; a bookcase filled with such a wealth of reading, and on a stand beside the couch where Lucinda lay was a bouquet of lovely flowers.

“O cousin Milly! how can I thank——” cried Lucinda, but Mildred stopped her.

“Thank Jotham, Lucy, dear, for he has done it all. Every bit of it,” said she, generously.

The look in his wife's eyes, and the clasp of those pale fingers around his own, was a revelation to Jotham Holden that he never forgot.

"I guess I don't want to go to Heaven just yet, cousin Milly," said Lucinda, with a misty smile.

"GIT UP AND GIT."

Don't sit with idle folded hands
And discontented heart,
Because you've neither gold or lands,
Nor drive your own dog-cart.

But stir yourself, "git up and git,"
And do your level best,
E'en though you never make a hit,
Your chance is as good as the rest.

There's plenty in this world for all
Who have the will to try,
And though alas, so many fall,
Because they do, must I?

And though we often lack the grit,
To pull against the tide,
Just make a start "git up and git."
The world is broad and wide.

And if at first our efforts fail
To win dame Fortune's smile,
And the shore towards which we've set our sail,
Seems many a weary mile.

Don't lower your sail the smallest bit,
But struggle bravely on,
Renew your strength, "git up and git,"
Till the race is finally won.

KESIAH'S INDEPENDENCE.

It was the day before the Fourth, and Kesiah Morse stood in the door-way of the old farm-house kitchen, and watched her son Ezra drive slowly down the rocky hillside. His wife Martha looked back and waved her hand, while the two boys, John and Nathan, seated in the back of the buggy, with their legs dangling over the edge, shouted "Good-bye, Grandma," at the top of their childish voices. A lonesome look crept into Kesiah's faded blue eyes as she turned back to the empty house. Queen Elizabeth, the great white cat, came and rubbed her snowy sides against Kesiah's dress without receiving her usual pat, and the stately black rooster paced back and forth before the kitchen door in unmolested dignity. A strange mood had taken possession of Kesiah, and her usual cheerful patience had forsaken her. Glancing around the sunny kitchen where for long years she had toiled over her homely tasks, a sudden distaste to the familiar surroundings swept over her.

"Folks seem to think I'm good for nothin' but to stay to home and work," she muttered discontentedly. "Ezra and Martha ride away 'thout ever askin' me if I'd like to go, too; all agoin' to spend Independence day at the village. 'Spose they think I'm too old to care 'bout sich things, but I guess I've as much spirit as any on 'em if I be goin' on seventy-year-old," and as if to emphasize this fact she seized a broom and made a sudden dash at the old rooster whose red comb was thrust inquisitively inside the open door.

"Brother Caleb's folks down to the city aint never asked me to spend Independence day with them," continued Kesiah, talking aloud to herself as women who are much alone, are apt to do when excited, "and the Fourth of July is his birthday, too. Dear me, I remember it as plain as if 'twas only yesterday, the day Caleb was born. I was a great girl, six-

teen-year-old, and Cale was sich a cute little baby. I wanted mother to name him George Washington, 'cause he was born Independence day, but mother was set to have him called Caleb after Uncle Caleb Brown, and so 'twas. Well, Caleb was a smart leetle boy and growed up to be a smart man, and is real forehanded, too. I aint no call to feel hard toward brother Caleb if he don't come to see his old sister very often, he's allus sent me and the children a remembrance every Christmas since he left home, and when Jotham died he was mighty good to me."

The sudden rumble of wheels aroused her from her muttered soliloquy, and stepping to the door she saw a two seated democrat wagon, drawn by a stout farm horse, pause before the house.

"Hello! Aunt Kesiah," called out a rough good-natured looking man, sitting on the front seat, "where's Ezra?"

"He's taken Martha and the boys and gone down to the village to spend Independence day with Jane's folks. Where be you all a-goin', Mr. Jones?" answered Kesiah going out to the wagon and shaking hands with Mrs. Jones who sat on the seat beside her husband with a fat baby in her arms, while on the back seat a pleasant faced old lady was sandwiched in between two youngsters.

"Oh! we are all out on a regular spree, Aunt Kesiah," laughed the jolly farmer. "Fourth of July don't come but once a year, and I told Susan we might as well hitch up and go down to the village and celebrate. Why didn't Ezra take you along, too, Aunt Kesiah?" A little flush crept into Kesiah's wrinkled cheeks as she answered hastily,

"Ezra's buggy aint got but one seat, so there wa'n't no room for me to ride, and then someone ought to stay to home and look after things, and I aint much of a hand to go galivanting round the country any way."

"Now Mis' Morse, it do seem too bad to leave you here all alone two whole days," spoke up Grandma Jones's quivering voice, "aint you afeared to stay?"

"Sakes alive, no," answered Kesiah bravely, "there aint nobody a-goin to tech me."

"Well, we must be a-movin', so good-bye, Aunt Kesiah, be sure and lock up tight, so no one won't carry you off afore Ezra gets back," said farmer Jones, and starting up his horse they soon disappeared down the hill.

Kesiah stood a few moments and watched the cloud of dust that hid the receding wagon, while the smile faded from her face and a strange, wistful expression took its place. With a sigh she turned back toward the house, but as she reached the door-way she suddenly sank down on the step and covered her face with her hands. A storm of feeling swept over the poor old frame that seemed to shake the very foundations of her being. The long years of toil and neglect, the petty trials of her daily life, the unsatisfied yearnings after brighter days, seemed to rise up in one black torrent of bitterness and despair, and the self-control of years was for the time completely swept away.

"Kesiah Morse, you are an old fool," she burst out at last, starting up and brushing away the tears with a trembling hand, "a-sittin' here and a-bawlin' 'cause ye feel sort of lonesome like. Any one would 'spose ye hadn't a right to go where ye like. There aint no string tied to ye, why don't ye go somewhere if ye want to?" the last words were spoken so loud and fierce, that Queen Elizabeth who was dozing in the sunshine on the door-mat, sprang up and scud around the house, giving a backward look of alarm at her mistress's unusual manner. As the echo of her impulsive words rang in her ears, a new thought seemed to form itself in her mind, and a look of energy and decision came into her eyes and flushed her thin cheeks.

"I've just a good mind to do it as ever I had to eat," she exclaimed excitedly. "I guess Caleb's folks will be just as glad to see me even if they aint sent me no special invite; maybe they forgot it. I've got my hen money, and that five-dollar gold piece Caleb sent me last Christmas. It's only a mile down to the cross roads, and I guess I can foot it that much,

and wait there till the stage comes along that will carry me to the depot. I'll get home again by the time Ezra and Martha do, and won't they be surprised to hear all about Caleb's grand house and fine city wife?"

With the pleased enthusiasm of a child, Kesiah bustled about tidying up the kitchen and putting the house to rights; then donning her best black alpaca gown, and tying on a bonnet of a style many seasons old, she grasped her old-fashioned carpet-bag in her hand and started down the hill.

The hot July sunshine poured down on the bent figure, as Kesiah plodded patiently along the dusty road, pausing now and then to wipe the perspiration from her wrinkled face, and to ease her tired limbs. Ephraim Sawyer, the stage driver, peered down from his lofty seat on the stage-coach as he caught sight of the strange figure standing at the cross-roads, waving a faded carpet bag to attract his attention, and with a great flourish he brought his horses to a standstill.

"By thunder!" he exclaimed as he recognized the old lady,

"If it aint old Mis' Morse; where on 'arth can she be a-goin' all alone. Hello? Aunt Kesiah, did you want to ride 'long of me?" he added as she drew near the coach.

"I want you to take me to the depot Mr. Sawyer. I'm a-goin' down to the city," answered Kesiah trying to climb up the high step to the coach door.

"Certain, certain, Mis' Morse," said Ephraim jumping down and lifting the small figure into the roomy coach. "Aint you 'mazin' smart to be a-goin' down to the city all alone?"

"Well, I don't know, but I do feel pretty peart these days," answered Kesiah, settling herself in her seat with quite the air of a grand dame riding out in her coach and four. "I'm a-goin' to see brother Caleb's folks."

"Sho, now you don't say," said Ephraim looking curiously at the old lady's complacent face, "Why it's nigh on to twenty year since you went to the city afore, aint it?"

"Yes, 'tis, Mr. Sawyer, and I think it's about time I went again," said Kesiah with unusual spirit.

Ephraim whistled softly to himself as he climbed up to his

seat, and with a loud "Get along there?" to his horses, he drove through the country roads with his solitary passenger. As the lumbering coach drew up to the depot, the sound of a steam whistle and the rumble of cars was heard, and Ephraim throwing open the coach door helped Kesiah out on the platform.

"Here's the train, Mis' Morse, you'd better get right aboard and buy your ticket of the conductor," said he hurrying the old lady through the crowd; and Kesiah, bewildered by the noise and confusion, grasped him by the arm and allowed him to help her on the train.

Settling herself comfortably in the first vacant seat, Kesiah drew in a long breath of pleasurable excitement. At last she was going somewhere. The whirling landscape and the strange faces of the people about her interested and amused her. Utterly unconscious of her own quaint figure, or the curious looks cast in her direction, she rode along with the blissful expression of a happy child. A touch on her arm, and the conductor's voice saying, "Ticket, madam," aroused her from her revery. Into the depths of the faded carpet bag Kesiah plunged her hand, in search of the old wallet that held the long hoarded hen money and the cherished five-dollar gold piece. The impatient conductor drummed on the arm of the seat as he waited for Kesiah's ticket; but when, after a lengthy search she rose pale and trembling, and stood gazing at him in frightened silence a frown gathered on his face.

"Come, come, madam, your ticket," he said, gruffly.

"I aint got no ticket, and I've lost all on my money," said Kesiah, in a quivering voice, the tears of disappointment and fright starting to her eyes, "I'll get right off here," and she tried to step out into the aisle.

"Sit down, madam, you can't get off here, this is a through express and don't stop before we get to Boston," said the conductor, pushing her back into her seat, "Why didn't you buy a ticket before you took the train?"

"Ephraim said I hadn't got time, so I thought the money would do just as well, and the land knows what's become on

't," answered Kesiah, beginning a fresh search for the missing wallet. "Brother Caleb will make it all right though if you'll let me go on to Bosting. I was a-goin' to spend Independence day with his folks. Do you know Caleb Brown? He's in the butcherin' business and has got dreadful forehanded and owns a grand house, and folks say he keeps two servant gals to wait on his wife; not that I think she is slack or lazy, but I don't suppose she was brought up to work, bein' a city gal, you know."

A faint smile crept around the conductor's stern mouth, as he listened to Kesiah's trembling voice and looked into her honest blue eyes.

"Well, well, madam, it can't be helped now, so don't worry," he said more kindly, and passed on.

The pleasure of the journey was gone for Kesiah, however, and a troubled, anxious expression settled over her aged face. Many a curious glance and amused smile was cast at the simple-hearted old lady, yet no one spoke to her, or tried to cheer her loneliness, or ease her distress of mind. As the train rushed into the depot, and the roar of the great city filled her ears, Kesiah trembled and grew faint with excitement. Jostled about and pushed this way and that by the surging crowd and almost deafened by the cries of the importunate hackmen, she made her way to the street.

"I 'most wish I hadn't 'a' come," she muttered to herself, "and I can't just seem to think now where brother Caleb lives. Seems to me 'twas some street that made you think of the landin' of the Pilgrims. Christopher Columbus street, or somethin' like that. Dear me, I do believe I'm a-growin' forgetful. Say, sonny, do you know where Christopher Columbus is?" she asked of a ragged little newsboy who stood on the curbstone.

"Dead 'fore you was born," answered he with a saucy grin.

"I mean the street named for him," continued Kesiah, anxiously.

"Aint none," said he, and thrusting a paper up into her face, he shouted in an ear-splitting voice, "Boston Herald!"

With an indignant look at the rude urchin, Kesiah hastened along the street, still muttering softly to herself. Footsore and weary, exhausted with the heat and her long fast, she had nearly reached the limit of her endurance when she found herself before one of the entrances of Boston Common. At sight of the great trees whose cool shadows lay across the broad walks, the flower beds gay with blossoms, and the glitter of the spray from the fountains, it seemed to poor Kesiah like a glimpse of Paradise. Dragging her tired limbs through the gateway, she wandered slowly along till she came to a secluded corner, and dropping down on a bench beneath the shade of a massive tree, she breathed a sigh of utter exhaustion.

"I'm clean beat out," she muttered, faintly; then before she knew it she sank into a huddled heap on the narrow bench, and the sleep of old age and weariness closed her eyes.

The afternoon shadows were lengthening, and the city clocks had rung out the hour of six, and still Kesiah slept on. Dusty and travel-stained, her shabby old bonnet fallen back on her shoulders, and her gray hair blown about her pale face, she was a pitiful looking object when the careless eyes of a burly policeman fell upon her.

"Dead drunk," he muttered, coarsely, going up to the prostrate figure and giving it a rude shake.

Kesiah opened her eyes and started to her feet, but her trembling limbs refused to support her, and with a cry of alarm she sank back.

"Got it bad, old gal, haint ye. Well, I know a good place for just such critters as you," said the man grasping her by the arm.

"Don't you tech me, Mr. Policeman. I'am agoin' to spend Independence day with brother Caleb's folks. He lives on Christopher Columbus street," cried Kesiah, shrinking back in affright.

"Oh, come now, old woman, that won't wash. You've come to town to have a nice little jag all to yourself and celebrate

the glorious Fourth. But you have to pay for such little frolics, you know, so come along," and he pulled her roughly to her feet.

"I don't know what you mean, Mr. Policeman, but I can't pay for nothin' for I've lost all my money. Oh, please, let me go to brother Caleb's, he's Caleb Brown, the butcher," wailed Kesiah, the tears streaming down her cheeks as she tried to pull away from the rough hand that held her. In her fright Kesiah almost shrieked her brother's name, and a stout, middle-aged man who was walking slowly along the walk near by, paused and looked in the direction of the sound. With a sudden, indignant exclamation he hastened toward them, and pushing the policeman aside he bent over Kesiah, saying,

"What are you about, man? This isn't a drunk; the woman is sick," then as his eyes scanned her features more closely, he cried hoarsely, "My God, it's my own sister Kesiah."

With a glad cry of joy and relief the poor woman threw out her arms to her brother.

"I've come to spend Independence with you brother Caleb and I lost my wallet and I didn't know where Christopher Columbus street was, and——" but the strain had been too much, and for the first time in her quiet, healthy life, Kesiah Morse fainted away. To call a carriage and lift the insensible woman into it, was the work of but a few moments and tenderly did Caleb Brown hold his poor old sister in his arms during the short ride to his stately home on Columbus Avenue. Conscious-stricken and full of remorse for the long years of neglect, he vowed to himself that if it were not too late already, all that money, care and loving attention could do to make up for the past, should be lavished on the dear sister who had been a mother to him in his boyhood.

When Kesiah opened her eyes and found herself on a soft couch in a luxuriously furnished room, with loving faces bending over her, while tender hands ministered to her wants, a

smile of perfect happiness lit up her weary face, and without a word she fell into a deep sleep that lasted till the next morning.

Late in the evening of the next day Ezra Morse drove slowly up the hill to the old farm-house door, grumbling crossly because there was no light left burning for their late arrival. As he opened the door the silence of an empty house sent a strange chill through him, and striking a match he stepped into his mother's room. The smooth, white bed stared back at him in undisturbed quiet, and no trace of his mother was in the room or about the house. On the bureau lay the old wallet containing Kesiah's little wealth, where in her haste she had laid it and then forgotten it. Thoroughly alarmed, Ezra jumped into his wagon and drove in hot haste back toward the village, but 'ere he had gained the cross-roads he was met by the old stage coach.

"Hello, Ezra," cried out Ephraim as Ezra was driving past. "What's your rush? I've got something for you, so hold on a minute." Ezra drew up his horse, and held out his hand impatiently for the small yellow envelope in Ephraim's hand.

"Has your mother got home yet?" asked Ephraim, peering curiously at Ezra through the dim light of the summer evening.

"Got home from where, Eph? have you seen her? I can't find her anywhere," cried Ezra, in excited alarm.

"She went down to the city yesterday morning to your Uncle Caleb Brown's. I took her to the depot myself and put her on the cars. Why don't you read your telegram and see if it aint from your uncle?"

By the flickering light of a match, Ezra read the brief message telling him that his mother was safe in her brother's home, and with a muttered, "Thank God!" he turned his horse's head homeward.

Kesiah's Independence day was a happy one after all, and each member of her brother's household vied with the other in doing something for the comfort or pleasure of the dear old lady. Many long weeks passed away before she went back to the old farm, and Ezra and Martha learned in her absence

to value her at her real worth. So when her pleasant visit was over and she returned to her simple country life, her last years were made smooth and bright by more tender care and thoughtful interest on the part of her children.

THE WHIP-POOR-WILL.

Years have passed since a little child,
I first heard the whip-poor-will song,
Then happy faces round me smiled,
That I have missed so long.

And now once more their plaintive tune,
As I sit in the twilight here,
And watch o'er the hills the rising moon,
Falls softly on my ear.

And a chord of memory in my heart,
Awakes with a tender thrill,
And thoughts of the past will often start
At the sound of the whip-poor-will.

The old farm house I can seem to see,
That stands at the top of the hill,
And Grandma's face as she smiles at me,
Comes back with the whip-poor-will.

For many times in the days of yore,
I have sat on the old door-sill,
In the twilight hours, and o'er and o'er,
Heard the song of the whip-poor-will.

And now though years have passed away,
Yet in my heart there still,
Lingers sweet memories, that ne'r decay,
Brought back by the whip-poor-will.

A HALLOWE'EN ROMANCE.

October was going out in a blaze of glory. The air was warm and hazy with golden sunshine, that made the gorgeous foliage beautiful beyond description. Joyce Freeland had spent the short afternoon in the woods, gathering great branches of gold and crimson leaves, to carry back with her to her home in the city. Poor Joyce! her brief vacation was over, and the next day she must say good bye to the dear old farm, kind Aunt Mary and Cousin John, and resume once more her position behind the counter in one of the large dry goods stores, in the city of B—— while one and another of her fellow clerks had taken brief rests at seashore or mountain. Not till October was well on its way was she allowed her freedom, when, with all the speed possible she had hastened to the old farm, when she had passed so many happy seasons. Life was anything but a holiday with Joyce Freeland, for fate had left her to guide, single-handed, her barque on the ocean of life. Naturally healthy in mind and body, with a cheerful disposition that made the most of the small pleasures that came in her way, and caused her to bear patiently her daily crosses, Joyce had plodded along, ever looking ahead to brighter days. But the unusual heat of the past few months, and her long confinement in the close store, had told severely on the girl's splendid constitution. Never had she looked at life through so gloomy a vision as on this delightful afternoon, as she wandered through the woods, gathering rich spoils of nature's handiwork. Never had the prospect of her daily toil in the busy store seemed so obnoxious to her, or the winter months stretched out so endless and dreary. Long years of the same dull routine of daily duties seemed to spread out before her eyes, as she strove to pierce the future, and the prospect was anything but alluring.

The weary face of one grown old in the service of her employer rose up before her; one whose youth and beauty had swiftly faded in the grinding treadmill of work, till all personality was lost in the mechanical going through with the labor of the day. How long would it be before she too would look old and gray, thought Joyce, unconsciously passing her hand over the smooth bands of purple black hair that covered her head, or the brightness fade from her dark eyes, and her round cheeks grow hollow and wrinkled? A little sigh parted the rosy lips at this thought, for Joyce, like most girls of twenty was not wholly unconscious of her own claims to beauty.

The early twilight was gathering when Joyce walked into the farmhouse kitchen, laden with her spoils of the forest. A blazing fire of logs burned in the great fireplace, and lit up the long low room with a cheerful glow. The supper-table was spread, and the tea simmered on the hot bricks before the fire. Joyce glanced around the empty kitchen for the rosy faced maid of all work, but Nora was nowhere in sight. A low giggle, however, disclosed her whereabouts, and smiling a little in girlish sympathy, Joyce stepped into the roomy pantry. Bending over a pan of water, in which were floating what seemed to Joyce's astonished eyes small bits of paper, was Nora, laughing softly to herself.

"What are you doing, Nora?" asked Joyce, looking over the girl's shoulder. Nora jumped and screamed.

"Sure, Miss Joyce, how ye frightened me," said she with a giggle. "'Tis only a bit of a trick I'm after tryin'; a Hallowe'en trick, Miss."

"Is it Hallowe'en to-night Nora? I had forgotten all about it," said Joyce.

"Deed it is, Miss Joyce, and many's the ghost that'll walk the night," answered Nora in a tragic whisper.

"But what is this trick in the pan of water, Nora?" said Joyce laughing. "What are those bits of paper for?"

"'Tis the letters of ye're sweetheart's name that'll stay at the top, Miss Joyce, an' the rest will go to the bottom of the

pan," explained Nora, blushing and peeping at the pan of water, where were floating three tiny bits of paper, the rest having all sunk.

Joyce looked hard at the letters and read: "P. A. T." at which Nora giggled again, and ran into the kitchen. John Somers coming in with a pail of foamy milk in each hand, heard the laughing voices of the two girls, and setting down his pails, came and looked over Joyce's shoulder as she still bent over the pan of water.

"Oh! Cousin John," cried Joyce glancing up at the tall figure, her black eyes dancing with fun, "Nora has been trying a Hallowe'en trick to see who her sweetheart is."

"Did she find out?" said John laughing.

"So it seems," laughed Joyce, pointing to the letters that still lay on top of the water.

"P. A. T. Pat", read John aloud. As he spoke the outer door opened, and a big jolly faced Irishman stepped into the room.

"Did you want me, Sor?" asked he, hearing his master's voice.

"No, Pat," said John laughing, "but I think Nora does." A merry peal of laughter burst from the lips of the two girls, while Pat stood in the doorway looking bashfully at the blushing Nora.

"'Tis a pail of water I'm after wantin' Pat," cried that quick-witted damsel, thrusting a pail into Pat's hand, "so get along wid ye;" and Pat hastened to do her bidding, while the others gathered around the supper table laughing merrily.

John Somers was not a farmer from choice but from necessity. The youngest of five boys, it had fallen to his lot to care for his widowed mother, and to look after the farm. Ambitious for a higher education and a broader life than that which fate had allotted him, he had at first bitterly rebelled against the circumstances which restricted him; yet upright and honorable, and bound to his aged mother by the tenderest of ties, he had smothered his ambition, taken up his burden and bided his time. So the years had sped, till at the age of

thirty-five John Somers had grown to look at life seriously and earnestly, realizing that in duties fulfilled the sacrifice of self must be complete.

Joyce Freeland was John's cousin many times removed, yet the faint relationship was a fiction they both rejoiced in and clung to. Lonely Joyce's one happiness in life was her brief visits at the farm, while the sunshine of the sweet girl's presence made glad the hearts of both John and his mother.

Later in the evening they were all gathered around the open fire, John with a copy of Burns in hand from which he had been reading aloud "Hallowe'en," while Joyce, seated on the rug, roasted chestnuts as she listened.

"Cousin John," said Joyce as he paused in his reading, "I've heard of another Hallowe'en trick; this one is to walk backward down the cellar stairs at midnight with a candle in one hand and a mirror in the other, and the face of your future husband or wife will appear reflected in the glass."

"Rather a dangerous trick to try, Joyce," said John smiling, "so don't attempt it I beg of you."

"Dear me, cousin John," cried Joyce with a shiver; "I wouldn't go down cellar at midnight for all the husbands in the world."

"Not if you thought you would meet your ideal?" queried John mischievously.

"Not even for that," answered Joyce, though her cheeks took on a deeper tinge at the question.

John Somers was unusually wakeful that night, and the clock had struck twelve before he aroused himself from his thoughtful study before the open fire, and started for his chamber. Looking about the rooms to see that all was secure for the night, he bethought himself of the outer cellar door which he had carelessly left open, and taking a candle he softly opened the door that led from the kitchen, and went down the cellar stairs. Shutting the outer door and securely fastening it, he turned to retrace his steps, when he was startled by what seemed to be the apparition of a woman standing at the head of the stairs. Slowly and cautiously the figure advanced, a

lighted candle in one hand and a small mirror in the other, and breathlessly John awaited its approach. Like two pink mice, the little feet stepped one before the other down the stairs, and by the flickering light of the candle John saw Joyce's pale face and great black eyes, wide open, yet with a strange, unseeing stare in them; he realized in a flash that poor Joyce was walking in her sleep. With swiftly beating heart, he stood at the foot of the stairs fearful lest a misstep should precipitate her into his arms, and yet longing with a sudden wild impulse for that same mishap. At last the end was reached and she paused before him, still staring straight ahead with dark sightless eyes. Trembling and carefully John folded his arms softly about the slim form, and with a breath blew out the candle. Resting against his shoulder Joyce still slept on, and lifting her in his strong arms John bore her swiftly up the stairs, nor paused till he had laid her on her own white bed. Once, while the dark head rested against his breast, John's lips had touched the white face softly, and that kiss awoke the slumbering fire of love in his heart. All through the long hours between midnight and dawn, John Somers struggled with this fever of love and longing. Bright visions of what life might be with Joyce all his own were swiftly clouded by the thought of how impossible it was that she could ever love him with the love he hungered for. Fifteen years lie between us, was the thought that troubled his heart, and the morning found him worn and weary with the battle.

It was a pale face and dark-rimmed eyes that Joyce brought to the breakfast table the next morning, and Aunt Mary's motherly heart yearned over the lonely girl. Almost in silence, however, was the breakfast eaten, a strange constraint seeming to have fallen on the little party, and soon the hour of Joyce's departure was at hand. With tearful eyes she said her good-byes to the old farm and its inmates, and stepping into the carriage beside Cousin John, was driven slowly toward the depot. Silently, John drove along the lonely country road, his lips closed sternly. Not once that morning had his eyes dared to meet the questioning look in Joyce's dark orbs, lest

he should break through his resolution and speak words that might wound the sensitive girl, yet the thought of the blank that life would be without her filled his heart with an agony of longing.

"Have I done anything to offend you, Cousin John?" questioned Joyce at last, unable to bear the silence any longer.

"Surely not, child; why do you ask?" answered John smiling down at his companion.

"You seem so unlike yourself this morning, I thought perhaps—perhaps—" here Joyce's lips trembled and her eyes filled with tears.

"Hush! little girl," said John crushing her hand in his. "You are making it very hard for me."

Joyce pulled her hand away a little impatiently.

"I'm sure I don't know what you mean, Cousin John. I know it's very hard for me to have to go back to that old store," said she childishly. John laughed in spite of himself.

"You are hardly yourself this morning either, Joyce, it would seem," said he looking into the pale face and wondering if she realized anything of what had happened the night before. Suddenly Joyce raised her eyes to his face with a strange, earnest look in their dark depths. John met the glance with eyes from which his own soul gazed with all its love and longing, and a swift blaze of color swept over Joyce's pale cheeks as she turned away.

"I had such a strange dream last night, Cousin John," said she at last; John's heart leaped as he turned a questioning look at the girl.

"Did you?" was all his trembling lips could say.

"Yes, all about Hallowe'en," continued Joyce laughing a little nervously. "I dreamed that I walked down the cellar stairs at midnight, with a candle and a mirror to see who my sweetheart was to be."

"And did you dream you saw any one?" said John as she paused.

"Yes—" answered Joyce softly and slowly.

“Was it a strange face, or one you had seen before?” asked John, impelled by a power too strong to resist.

“I had seen it before,” answered Joyce, still in that low soft voice.

“And was it one that you could love, dear?” breathed John close in her ear.

“With all my heart,” said Joyce, turning a face bright with blushes toward him.

Down dropped the reins, and the old horse stopped short, as John’s two arms clasped her close.

“God bless you for those words, darling!” cried he kissing her over and over again.

“You take a good deal for granted, Cousin John,” said Joyce slipping from his arms. “I didn’t say whose face it was that I saw, did I?”

“Ah! sweetheart, but I know,” said John gaily; and then he told her of his experience of the night before. Joyce listened with a demure face, but as he finished she looked up at him with eyes full of mischief.

“That kiss awoke me, John,” said she, with a roguish smile.

MY IDEAL.

Why dost thou mock me so, thou fanthom sprite,
And lure me onward till I’m worn and spent
With eager reaching; and my heart finds vent
In tears and weak despair at thy swift flight?
Come, let me see thy face, so fair and bright,
And thy sweet smile in tender kindness bent
On me, shall prove a balm from Heaven sent.
For though so high thou dwellest that my sight
Can scarcely pierce the space, yet my desire,
Still urges me to climb the rugged way
That leads to thee; and though I faint and tire,
I will not yield; but toiling day by day,
Press onward to thy side, my love, my soul,
For only then, shall I have reached my goal.

A DAY FOR THANKSGIVING.

“The Governor has ‘p’inted a day for Thanksgivin,’ Abigail,” said Obed Fletcher, laying down his newspaper and glancing at his wife a little anxiously. “I suppose we could kill the old white rooster an’ a couple o’ chickens,” continued he, as he received no reply. “Seems to me a good chicken pie’s putty fair eatin’ ‘thout any turkey.”

A dark look swept across Abigail’s face.

“We haint no call to keep Thanksgivin’, turkey or no turkey,” answered she, bitterly.

“Perhaps we aint, Abigail,” said Obed, with a sigh, “an’ as for me, I don’t feel to care. I was jest a-thinkin’ that Dulcie would be sort o’ disappointed ef we didn’t make no ‘count on ‘t.”

“Dulcie ‘ll have to learn to bear disappointments, same as I have. There aint been much else for me, for the last forty years,” answered his wife.

Obed Fletcher’s round face paled a little and his voice grew husky as he said, slowly:

“The Lord’s hand has been laid putty heavy on us, wife, I’ll allow; yet what are we that we should go ag’in His will?”

“I don’t know but we’re jest as deservin’ as lots of others that don’t have no afflictions to speak on. We’ve both of us served the Lord faithfully this many a year. We’ve gone regular to meetin’, rain or shine. We’ve given to the poor accordin’ to our means, an’ helped to clothe the heathen. And we’ve denied ourselves to raise the money to send out missionaries to preach the gospel. We’ve allus done to others as we’d have ‘em do to us, an’ been fair dealin’ with our neighbors. Yet the Lord don’t seem to ha’ made much account on ‘t, only to send us more burdens to bear than the average. I’ve tried to be patient an’ uncomplainin’, Obed, but I don’t see no reason for any special thanksgivin’.”

Like a torrent the bitter words fell from Abigail's lips, and rising hastily she gathered up the apples she had been paring and walked swiftly into the buttery and closed the door.

A look of shocked surprise had slowly settled on Obed's face as he listened, yet he found no answer ready before his wife had left the room. Mild-tempered and easy, Obed Fletcher had meekly bowed his head beneath the storm of adversities that had swept over him, yielding without a struggle to the inevitable. Like many good Christians, he firmly believed that he saw the Lord's hand in all their afflictions. So resignation to His will had been the one thing Obed had sought for, and apparently obtained.

The spirit that dwelt in Abigail, however, was not so easily conquered. With a keener and deeper insight into the nature of things than was given her husband, she had long struggled with the tide of bitterness that seemed to engulf her. In the early years of her married life, two little ones had been carried off by diphtheria.

"The Lord giveth, and the Lord taketh away. Blessed be the name of the Lord," quoted the minister, standing beside the little coffins. Yet the mother's heart kept whispering, bitterly: "Oh, if Obed had only a-fixed that drain the children never 'd been sick."

And so it was with many of the misfortunes and disappointments that came to them as the years rolled on. She had seen, not the Lord's hand, but the mismanagement of the Lord's servants. The savings of years had been swept away by the failure of the village bank, whose uncertain condition they had been warned of, yet heeded not. The loss of a barn by fire was caused by a spark from Obed's pipe, never acknowledged by him, though. All these, however, were but minor troubles to the one great sorrow of Abigail's life, the loss of her only son, the father of Dulcie.

From a little child, Reuben Fletcher had been the idol of his parents. The one child spared them, they had lavished such love and tenderness upon him as usually falls to the lot of an only son. Their brightest hopes and fondest ambitions

were centered in him, yet, alas! they failed to keep him contented in the little country town in which he was born. At the age of twenty-one, he announced his intention of going to sea. In spite of prayers and pleadings, Abigail Fletcher said good-bye to her boy, and he sailed away.

With youth and hope, light-hearted and buoyant, Reuben little dreamed of the aching hearts he left behind him, and only the mother who has her only child torn from her arms can know the bitterness of Abigail's grief.

Long and lonely had been the years that followed. With the close of each the hope of her boy's return grew more and more faint. The news of his marriage to a pretty French girl had come to them, then a silence of many years. At last, the joyful news that he was coming home fell upon their hearts like a message from Heaven. "Coming home for good," he had written, "to end his days in dear New England, and to place in his mother's care his own motherless little daughter."

Ah, me! who in this world can count on the fulfilment of earthly hopes? A storm at sea wrecked the homeward bound vessel and nearly all on board were lost. Among the rescued was Reuben Fletcher's sixteen-year-old daughter, Dulcie, who found her way at last to her grandparents' home. Cruel, indeed, seemed this last terrible disappointment to Abigail. Even the coming of her grandchild to brighten the old farmhouse, scarcely eased the bitterness of the blow.

Two years had passed since then bringing the changes that come to us all. Slowly the shock of their last great sorrow had passed away, leaving the cold calm of buried hopes. With his usual philosophy Obed accepted the inevitable with a resigned spirit, finding inexpressible comfort in the companionship of his bright little granddaughter. But Abigail! Those of us who have long sorrowed, who have silently borne the disappointments of years, who have seen one after another their earthly idols crumble and fall, and have secretly clung with fierce despair to one frail hope, can understand the agony that fell upon her spirit.

The hidden rebelliousness of long years seemed to close

about her heart, till it lay like a stone in her bosom. Outwardly she was the same, in no wise neglecting the duties that came to her hand. Yet a rigid sternness of manner, a sharper speech, a colder sympathy, proved to the keen observer the hardening of Abigail Fletcher's nature.

Like a ray of Heaven's own sunshine was merry-hearted, rosy cheeked Dulcie. With dancing black eyes, sprightly ways and foreign accent, she swiftly won the hearts of all who came in contact with her. With easy adaptability she fitted into the routine of country life, showing the strain of New England blood by her capable ways. Well it is that the young have so little time to grieve. Tenderly as she cherished the memory of her father, the mere joyousness of living lightened the burden of her woe.

Standing just outside the kitchen door, she had heard her grandmother's bitter words with startled surprise. A little frightened and a good deal disappointed, she silently closed the door and passed out of the house. The keen air of the November day swept across her face and heightened the color of her cheeks. From a pan of shelled corn she threw out handfuls to the group of hens and chickens that gathered about her. With stately mien the old rooster stalked up to the pan, and helped himself, pompously pushing aside his several wives till he had eaten the larger share, after which manly act he spread his snowy wings and crowed lustily.

Smiling a little Dulcie watched his manœuvres and thought of her grandfather's words as to his probable fate. So busily was she thinking that she started violently when a gay voice called her name.

"Hullo, Dulcie!" A young fellow in a rough suit of farmer's clothes stood smiling at her from the roadside.

"Why, Joe Porter, how you scared me!" throwing out the rest of the corn and hurrying toward him.

"I thought you'd gone to sleep, you stood so still," said Joe, laughing.

"Oh, I was only thinking," said Dulcie, her eyes drooping a little beneath the honest admiration in Joe's.

"Must 'a' been mighty serious to have kept you so still," said he.

"Yes, it was," answered Dulcie, with a sigh, then quickly: "But, where are you going so early?"

Joe's face sobered a little. "Only to the village to post a letter for Mrs. Shelby, Next week 's Thanksgiving, you know."

"Yes," said Dulcie, her breath coming quickly. "What are your folks goin to do?"

"Oh, the Shelbys are all going to Boston to spend Thanksgiving with their rich daughter. I guess they'll have a grand time," said Joe, tossing up the letter in his hand and catching it again with a forced aid of indifference.

Dulcie's black eyes widened. "But what will you do?" she asked, tremulously.

"Me? Oh, I'll hang 'round and look after the house and stock and eat bread and milk for my dinner," answered Joe, laughing a little huskily.

Two great tears welled up into Dulcie's eyes and stayed there.

"I suppose your folks will make a big time and have a whopping turkey," added Joe, without looking at her.

"No, we aint going to keep Thanksgiving this year," said Dulcie, slowly, with her eyes on the ground.

"Why not?" cried Joe, astonished.

"Oh, grandma doesn't think she has anything to be thankful for," said Dulcie, slowly, her lip quivering slightly.

Joe's keen eyes flashed a quick glance around at the substantial farm-house, the rich acres lying all about them, and finally, settled upon sweet little Dulcie's drooping face. His color rose swiftly.

"Well, I never!" exclaimed he, "I just think I'd be thankful if I had all this—and you, too, Dulcie."

At his last words the girl glanced up into the boyish face so near her own, and the two big drops in her dark eyes rolled down her cheeks. It was too much for poor Joe, and his arms closed hastily about the slight form.

"Dulcie, dear, dear, Dulcie, don't cry," he whispered, softly. "Sometime, before many years, we'll spend all of our Thanksgiving days together, and we'll have the biggest turkeys to be found in the country, won't we, darling?"

Dulcie's curly black head bobbed a decided "yes" against Joe's shoulder.

"And plum puddings, too," she mumbled in his coat collar.

Then they both laughed, and all their troubles vanished into thinnest air.

When one is eighteen and in love, nothing else matters very much, and so Dulcie's clear young voice rang out merrily in the cold air as she danced back into the house. And Joe Porter went whistling on his way to the village. What difference did it make if Joe Porter was only the Shelbys' hired man? He was honest and good, handsome and full of New England energy and ambition, and his life was all before him. Ah! what grand possibilities are ever before the lad of twenty!

It was only a few days now before Thanksgiving. Far and near the busy housewives were bustling about in anxious preparation for the feast of the day. The plump turkeys in the farmyards seemed to know intuitively their coming fate, and hid themselves in out of the way corners. The Fletchers' old white rooster, however, strutted about in his usual pompous manner, snubbing his wives and asserting his independence by frequent loud crows. Evidently the annual slaughter of fowls was a matter of supreme indifference to his lordship.

The clear, cold air had softened, and occasionally a snowflake fluttered earthward.

"Looks if we was goin' to have a storm, Obed," said Abigail Fletcher to her husband as he was going out one morning.

"Nothin' more 'n a squall," answered Obed, tying a big woolen scarf around his neck, and pulling on a pair of clumsy mittens. "I've got to get the rest o' that load o' wood up in the north lot anyhow," added he.

"Pity ye hadn't 'a' done it before the cold weather set in," said Abigail sharply; "ye could jest as well 's not."

Obed winced slightly but made no answer. "Accordin' to

my way of thinkin' procrastination is as great a sin as lots of others folks make more ado about," continued Abigail hastily filling a tin pail with food for his luncheon. "Ye're allus a-puttin' off till tomorrow what should 'a' been done today, Obed, an' ye know it."

"Well, wife, I s'pose I have got 'bout as many faults as they average," answered Obed calmly. "But we aint none on us perfect anyhow, an' the Lord has to have lots o' patience with the most on us poor creeters."

"The Lord aint the only one, either," muttered Abigail, closing the door after him as he went out.

As the day advanced the air grew more and more heavy with the coming storm. Thicker and faster fell the tiny snow-flakes till a whitened landscape lay all about them.

The early twilight was fast closing in, and Obed Fletcher had not returned.

"I can't see what 's keepin' yer grandpa," said Abigail to Dulcie as she peered anxiously out into the darkness. Springing up Dulcie slipped outside. Quickly she returned.

"It isn't so very dark yet, grandma. I guess I'll run up the road a little way and see if I can't meet him," said she, wrapping herself up to go out."

"I'm most afraid to have ye," answered her grandmother uneasily.

"Oh! I'll be all right. The snow won't hurt me, so don't worry, grandma," and she was gone.

Left alone, Abigail busied herself for a time setting the table for supper. Then piling on more wood in the great fireplace in the living room, she sat down to wait the coming of her husband and Dulcie. The tasks of the day had been unusually hard and had wearied her greatly. So, in spite of her anxiety, the silent room, the monotonous ticking of the old clock, and the warm fire, soothed her into forgetfulness, and she slept.

Then there came to Abigail Fletcher a dream. The long, low room seemed to be filled full of people. A solemn hush held them spellbound. Suddenly a voice spoke.

"The Lord giveth and the Lord taketh away," it said.

Then Abigail saw before her a long, narrow coffin, and the dead face of her only son. Once more that old feeling of rebellious bitterness swelled her heart. "I can't bear it! I can't bear it! The Lord is cruel," she cried.

"Blessed be the name of the Lord," said the voice.

Silently she turned away, when a word was whispered in her ear, "Mother!" There before her stood her boy smiling down into her face.

"Reuben! Oh! my son, Reuben!" she cried, and the sound of her own voice awoke her.

The room lay all in darkness save for the faint light from the smouldering logs in the fireplace. Suddenly the clock struck ten. Frightened and trembling, Abigail arose and lighted a lamp.

The supper table stood as she had left it, untouched. What could have happened that no one had come? And Dulcie! Where was the child? The storm still raged and swept against the window panes in white drifts. A deadly sinking at her heart made Abigail grasp a chair for support, then with an effort she roused herself to action.

Thrusting her feet into Obed's long boots, and wrapping her heavy shawl about her, she took from its nail the barn lantern. With trembling fingers she lighted it, and went out into the storm and darkness. It was only a quarter of a mile to the Shelbys' farmhouse, yet through that blinding storm and with the weight of her terrible anxiety oppressing her heart, it seemed miles to Abigail.

With a bound Joe Porter was out of bed, into his clothes, and at the door, at the second blow of the old brass knocker. At sight of Abigail's tall form he started back in surprise.

"Why, Mrs. Fletcher, what's the matter? Any one sick?" asked he breathlessly.

"Dulcie and her grandfather are lost in the snow," said Abigail, her voice sounding strange and weird from out the darkness. "Can't you hitch up an' see if you can find them?"

"Lost in the snow! Dulcie?" muttered Joe, bewildered.

"Mr. Fletcher went this morning up to our north lot to

fetch a load o' wood, an' he didn't get home soon as we thought he ought, an' so Dulcie started out to meet him. But they aint either on 'em come yet," explained Abigail.

"I'll call Mr. Shelby an' we'll go straight an' hunt 'em up," said Joe, his heart growing cold with the thought of their possible fate. "And you'd better come in an' wait here till we get back," he added, trying to draw Abigail into the house. But she turned away with a surpressed groan.

"No, I must go home," she muttered, turning quickly away. Back through the storm and darkness she tramped, her limbs trembling beneath her. Oh! the agony of those long hours of waiting! Never to the day of her death could she forget them.

Replenishing the dying fire, filling the kettles with water, she moved restlessly about the house, now and then peering out into the darkness with eager eyes. Remorsefully she dwelt on the sharp words she had spoken to Obed that morning. Pitifully and tenderly she thought of her little granddaughter, and her heart ached with its agony of dread.

At last came the sound of tramping feet, and the door was thrown open. Joe Porter walked in with Dulcie's slight form in his arms.

"She is nearly frozen, I'm afraid," said he huskily, as he placed her on a couch by the fire.

But what was that coming through the doorway? Abigail stood as if turned to stone. "What has happened?" she said with dry lips. "Is he——"

"No, Mrs. Fletcher, he isn't dead. Don't be frightened," quickly answered Mr. Shelby, who with another man carried the long board on which lay her husband's silent form. "He's only insensible from the pain of his leg. A heavy log of wood had fallen across it and we fear it is broken. Dulcie found him, but the log was too heavy for her to move. She kept him from freezing by throwing buffalo robes over him, and piling branches of the trees around him to keep out the storm. She tried to find her way out of the lot to get help, but the snow bewildered her so she lost her bearings. We found them both together under a pile of boughs."

It was a long night of terrible anxiety for Abigail that followed, but when morning dawned she knew that her dear ones would be spared to her.

Thanksgiving day was as perfect a day as ever dawned upon dear New England. Clear and cold, the air was like wine. The brilliant sunshine flooded the snow-clad earth and illuminated the mountain tops with a crown of shining gems. Obed Fletcher was confined to his bed with a broken leg, yet aside from that was not seriously injured by his long exposure, thanks to Dulcie's timely aid.

And Dulcie was quite her own gay self, and danced about the house in fine spirits. Alas! for the old white rooster! His pride was laid in the dust, or rather, on the chopping block, for he was doomed to grace the Thanksgiving table of the Fletchers.

Dulcie had confided to grandma the lonely condition of Joe Porter, in the absence of the Shelby family. And grandma, who seemed wonderfully changed these last few days, had considerately invited him to eat dinner with them on Thanksgiving day. And Dulcie's heart was brimful of joy at the prospect. Into the midst of all these happenings, a horse and sleigh was driven up to the door. A man with a bushy beard jumped out and coolly opening the door walked into the house. Then indeed did the outer shell that covered the tenderness of Abigail's heart fall away forever.

"Reuben, my son Reuben!" she cried, clasping the stranger in her arms.

Yes, after an absence of twenty years Reuben Fletcher had returned to his boyhood's home. It would be too long a story to tell of all that had befallen Reuben since we heard of him last. It is enough for the reader to know that he was once more safe in the bosom of his family. That Obed and Abigail had at last found their son, and Dulcie was made happy by a father's love.

They were gathered about the dinner table. The old white rooster, in the form of a delicious stew, made the first course.

Two plump chickens that were to end their earthly career in the form of a mammoth pie, came next; and who cared for a turkey? Surely not Joe nor Dulcie.

Reuben Fletcher's grateful glance covered the loaded table, then rested on his old mother's happy face and his little daughter's rosy cheeks. Reverently he bowed his head.

"For all our mercies, oh, Lord, make us thankful."

Abigail's voice was low and tremulous, yet it rang with the true spirit as she said earnestly, "Amen."

PATIENCE.

Though "all things come to him who will but wait,"
Yet we can't help but oft' rebel at fate,
That ever holds with tantalizing gleam,
The fond fulfilment of some cherished dream.

And when one seems to have gained at last the goal,
For which they've staked their life, perhaps their soul.
And find they still have many miles to tread,
Ah! then the heart grows sick, and hope seems dead.

'Tis then the lesson that we all must learn,
E'en though our heads do throb, and hearts do burn,
That Job, so many years ago learned well,
And we so oft' in history have heard tell.

Then let us imitate with worthy zeal,
This most illustrious saint, and ever feel,
E'en when our patience is severely tried,
That "all things come to him who will but bide."

ONE SOLDIER'S GRAVE.

The May sunshine lay warm and mellow across the freshly scoured floor. Softly it touched the gray hair of the woman that stood in the door of the old farmhouse, and flecked the lilac bush that leaned against the window.

Shading her eyes with her hand, the woman peered earnestly down the long country road as the rumble of wheels caught her ear. A wagon-load of evergreens, drawn by a stout farm horse soon came in sight.

"Hello! Mis' Jacobs goin' to help us with the wreaths this year?" said he with a cheerful wave of his hand toward the fragrant pile, as he jumped from his team.

"I s'pose I be, Sam," answered the woman, glancing with solemn eyes at the loaded wagon. "I aint never refused to do my duty by them poor boys in the old burying-ground, even if my old man aint among 'em."

"That 's so, Mis' Jacobs, sure enough," quickly responded Sam warmly, "you've allus done the square thing by every soldier boy that was brought home to sleep in the old graveyard; and I jest hope the Lord will put it into someone's heart to do the same by Zachary Jacobs."

The woman sighed.

"Seem 's if I'd feel more contented like if I only jest knowed where Zach was buried," said she, her eyes wandering wistfully toward the distant horizon, as though to pierce the veil that hid that far off Southern grave.

Sam balanced himself uneasily first on one foot and then on the other.

"'T would be sort of comfortin', Mis' Jacobs, sure," said he slowly, "but after the boys saw him fall at Antietam they narry one on 'em heard of him again."

"I know it, Sam, an' that makes me feel sometimes 's if 't

wa'n't true that he was dead," said Nancy Jacobs eagerly. "Why, some days I gets to thinkin' on 't till I can't rest easy nohow; 't seems if I could almost see him a-comin' in the door," and she gazed earnestly down the road as if her longing eyes could see her husband's tall form in the distance.

"Now, Mis' Jacobs, don't ye go to feelin' that way, for if Zach was alive, ye'd a known on 't afore this time. Why, it 's ten year or more since he was left on that battlefield for dead, an' there aint the smallest chance he'll turn up alive," said he earnestly. Then lifting out a big armful of sweet-smelling greens he threw them down beside the door.

"Well, I must be a-gettin' on; so here's a few greens an' ye can make as many wreaths as ye like, an' I'll call an' get 'em in a few days."

"Spose I can keep one on 'em to hang on Zach's peg, over his old coat that's hung there ever since he went away?" questioned Nancy.

"Certain, certain," answered Sam, his voice a little husky at the woman's pathetic manner. "None on 'em deserves to be remembered more'n Zach Jacobs, sure." Then with a loud "Go 'long!" to his horse, he was soon out of sight down the shady country road.

Gathering up the evergreens in her apron, Nancy Jacobs turned and went into the house, and after spreading down an old sheet to protect her clean floor from the litter, she began her humble task.

Deftly her fingers wove the long strands together, while her thoughts traveled back over the years of her lonely widowhood. Ten long years had passed since that never-to-be-forgotten day, when, in the column of the village newspaper she read her husband's name among the list of those who were "missing" after the battle of Antietam. Oh! the agony of the days and weeks that followed, when with mingled feelings of hope and despair she had watched and waited for further news of her loved one. Yet the days came and went, bringing naught but silence to her longing heart. Then had come the return of the soldiers who were left from her husband's regi-

ment, and among them those who had seen him fall on that fatal battlefield. Then the hope that she might gaze once more on his dear face, though asleep in the Eternal Arms, was taken from her, and the longing to see the spot of ground that held his poor remains, took its place in her heart. Day by day, year after year, this thought grew and strengthened, till it had become the one wish of her lonely life.

In giving her husband to the service of his country, Nancy Jacobs had given her all. Two small graves in the village burying-ground held the disappointed hopes of a mother's love; yet, with the martyrdom of our brave New England women, she had sent her last home tie to fight in that noble cause, and finally to sleep in an unknown grave.

The last of the evergreens had taken the desired shape through Nancy's skilful fingers, and lay in a neat pile ready for Sam to take away. Tenderly she had placed one of the wreaths on the peg over the faded, threadbare coat of Zach's home life, one of the links of the past her woman's heart clung to. As her trembling fingers touched the old familiar garment, the waves of memory swept over her like a flood, and swiftly the tears gathered and fell upon her handiwork. Then there suddenly came to the lonely woman the feeling of a presence near, and as if spoken aloud, so clear and distinct seemed the voice in her ear, she thought she heard the word "come."

A little startled, Nancy glanced quickly about her; but the purple lilacs nodding at the window, and the sunbeams dancing across the bare floor seemed to laugh at her fears.

"I must be a-gettin' dreadful nervous," she muttered to herself as she hastily brushed her eyes, "but 't seemed to me as if some one spoke to me then, sure."

All that day, in spite of her strong practical commonsense, the feeling remained with her, and the word "come" seemed whispered in every sound that fell upon her ear. In the breeze that swept the shower of apple-blossoms across her neat doorstep she heard it; in the murmur of the brook, whose tones she could hear from her open window, there came that

same plaintive voice; and the loud notes of the robins in the treetops seemed to have settled down into a solemn chant of that one word "come."

Through the long hours of the night, Nancy lay with wide open eyes staring into the darkness, and not until her mind had formed and matured a plan of action did they close in slumber.

With the coming of dawn, however, she arose and began her preparations for a long journey. It was many years since she had left the old farm for even the journey of a day, but so strong had grown the desire to learn something of her husband's last resting-place that she seemed impelled by a power stronger than herself to make this effort. Realizing nothing of the distance or the difficulties of a journey to that far-off South she had read of, she took from its hiding-place the small savings of years of economy and started forth into the unknown.

The whirling landscape, the unfamiliar faces, the many stops and changes, and the noise and clamor of the great cities dazed and bewildered her, and after what seemed like a troubled dream, she awoke one day and found herself in the city of Washington. Having read of that beautiful spot, the National Cemetery, where so many of our heroes are sleeping, Nancy Jacobs determined to look here for the grave of her husband. Through the long hours from sunrise to sunset, she wandered through those flower-bordered walks, peering at the names on the headstones in that field of graves, and gazing with wonderstruck eyes at the vast number marked "Unknown."

Could it be that among those poor nameless boys, Zachary Jacobs had found his last home? Heartsick and weary, Nancy sank down on a shady seat, while a feeling of despair and disappointment took possession of her. Through the broad avenues rolled the carriages filled with curious sightseers, yet no one seemed to notice the little old woman in her country-made gown who watched them with pathetic eyes.

Presently the warm sunshine, the fragrance of early blos-

soms, the sweet twitter of birds, soothed the tired nerves and there came to Nancy a delightful feeling of rest and peace. Then it was she seemed to be lifted and borne through space far, far away. The sweet smell of the pine-trees came to her nostrils, and the low murmur of their voices touched her ear. "Come," they seemed to say, and with a start Nancy awoke. Refreshed and strengthened, she drew from her pocket the little map that had been her guide throughout her journey, and once more studied its lines with renewed hope.

Thus it came to pass that the next day she was once more whirling through the country on, onward toward that spot of Southern ground, where the battle of Antietam was fought so many years ago.

In the little town of Sharpsburg she paused, feeling that here her feet were nearing earth sacred to the memory of slaughtered heroes. The Southern town hot, dusty and dirty, with its crowds of black faces all about her, was strange and bewildering to the country woman of the North, and Nancy Jacobs gazed about her with wondering eyes. Gaily-turbaned negroes passed her by with curious glances at her own quaint figure, while now and then the sallow face of a white woman looked sharply at her from the depths of a huge sunbonnet. Wearily Nancy's tired feet trod the dusty walk, as she sought for a place of rest and shelter from the burning rays of the sun. Suddenly a strange dizziness swept over her; the earth seemed to rise up like a huge wall, and the faces of the people about her blended together in one black sea. With a desperate effort she threw out her hands and clutched at the nearest object which happened to be the dress of a negress who was passing.

"Bres de Lawd, honey! What's de matter?" cried the woman as her arms clasped about Nancy's fainting form.

No answer came from the pale face that leaned against the negress's ample breast, for Nancy had reached the limit of her endurance, and tired nature was taking its revenge.

On the outskirts of the town there stood a little old house made of logs and slabs, and plastered on the outside with mud.

The interior was divided into two rooms, one used as a sleeping apartment, and the other as a general living room. A small leanto attached to one end served as kitchen. The large chimney of sticks and mud was on the outside of the house, and the great open fireplace in the living-room served a double purpose of cooking and heating. Behind the house a shady grove of shrubs and pine made cool shadows about the little homestead, and a small garden patch where a few gay blossoms smiled in the sunshine made a bit of color in the picture.

On a low cot bed in the sleeping room of this humble home Nancy Jacobs lay sleeping the slumber of utter exhaustion. A stout middle-aged negress bent over her with an anxious look on her good-natured face.

"I 'd jest like to know whar' dat ar' 'oman drapt from," she muttered. Mighty curi's how I done cotched her jest 'n time"

Nancy's eyes opened and gazed at the black face bending over her with a bewildered stare.

"How does ye feel now, honey?" asked the woman kindly.

"Better, I guess," answered Nancy faintly. "Where am I?"

At the sound of her voice the black woman smiled broadly.

"Wid dem who am de fren's ob ebery Yankee who come dis way," said she earnestly.

Nancy's tired eyes thanked her as they once more closed wearily and she slept. The loud ticking of a timepiece sounded in her ears, as a little later her eyes opened again and gazed about her with a steady look. Against the wall, hanging on a stout nail, was a huge, old-fashioned silver watch, merrily ticking away the hours. Strangely familiar it seemed to the poor homesick woman, and she gazed at it long and earnestly. A deep dent in one side caught her eye at last, and she rose up from her bed, pale and trembling.

Taking it down from its place on the nail, she pressed open the back and read with swiftly-beating heart the two letters engraven there, "Z. J." With a feeling that she had at last

found a clue, she walked into the next room and holding up the watch before the astonished negress, said in a quivering voice:

"Tell me, woman, where you got this watch?"

"Now, Missy, don ye go for to tink I done stole dat ar' watch," answered the woman earnestly. "Mars' Jacobs, a poor Union soldier what my man Pete toted off'n the battlefiel' ob Antietam, he done left it here wid Pete an' me til' some on the folks come 'long an' claim it, an' it done hang on dat ar' nail dis ten year an' no one come yet."

"What became of the soldier?" said Nancy eagerly.

"La, missy! he done die dat same night Pete toted him home," said the negress. "Is you from de North, missy, and did ye eber know Mars' Jacobs?"

"Zachary Jacobs was my husband," said Nancy, sinking down into a chair with the watch clasped tightly in her hand. "And I have come hundreds of miles to find the spot where he was buried."

The woman's eyes grew big and round with astonishment, and throwing up her two hands she cried earnestly:

"De Lawd's han' am in it, missy! De Lawd's han' hab led you to de right place. Bress de Lawd, oh, my soul!" Then taking Nancy's poor trembling hand in her own strong black one, she added:

"Come, Missy Jacobs, an' I 'll done show you de lobely spot wher' we buried Mars' Jacobs. An' Pete, he done ker ob de grave all these year lak as if 't was his own chile." And she led Nancy out through the door to the grove beyond.

In the centre of a cluster of pine-trees that grew in a circle around it, they had made the grave, and over it was spread earth's beautiful carpet of green, starred with lovely blossoms.

Nancy bent over the mound with the feeling that at last her pilgrimage was over, and she shed her first tears upon her husband's grave. A few days longer she remained with the warm-hearted people in the little log cabin, and learned from them all there was to be known of Zachary's last hours.

Daily she visited the lonely grave, and spent hours listening to the murmur of the fragrant pines, and dreaming of bygone days. But there came a day when she failed to return to the little cabin, and when they sought her, they found that the Angel of Peace had touched her and she had fallen asleep. Now indeed had Nancy Jacobs found her lost one.

THE WIND.

Blow ye bleak winds, howl and blow,
Piling high the drifts of snow,
Round the house your mournful wail,
Makes one shiver, and cheeks turn pale.

Down the chimney you sob and moan,
Through the tree-tops sigh and groan,
Rattling windows, swinging gates,
Hurrying, flurrying, never late.

Playing tricks on high and low,
Dealing each and all a blow,
Umbrellas turning inside out,
Causing a laugh, and merry shout.

Helping a man to raise his hat,
Letting another sit down flat,
Treating one and all the same,
Caring naught, for state or name.

Painting crimson, cheek and nose,
Nipping fingers, ears, and toes,
Making eyes o'er flow with tears,
While we hear your scornful jeers.

Oh! ye bleak winds, blow your fill,
Slamming, banging, never still,
Soon you'll tire and die away,
Worn and spent, with boisterous play.

A MOTHER'S LOVE.

"I'm sorry for you, Salome, though to tell the truth it's no more than I expected, from the way you've brought that boy up to please himself," and Mrs. Deacon Holden leaned back in her chair with an "I told you so" expression on her shrewd face.

Salome Rogers looked at her sister reproachfully a moment, then with an effort she answered quietly,

"I have sought to rule him through love, Caroline."

"Fiddlesticks, Salome, you are altogether too soft where Harold is concerned. A good thrashing once in a while does a boy more good than kisses and coddling."

"But you must remember that Harold has been my all, and has never known a father's love or care; I could not be harsh with him, Caroline," answered Salome, her blue eyes filling with tears as they glanced wistfully out over the landscape, as if they saw through space a lonely grave in a far off Southern field.

Mrs. Holden moved uneasily in her chair, then rising she said hastily.

"Well, well, Salome, don't fret; it may prove a good lesson to Harold, and though no doubt you are disappointed about the money, I hope you don't begrudge it to Philip."

A curious look swept for an instant over Salome Rogers's face, and her voice grew a shade colder as she answered,

"You are welcome to the money, Caroline, it is my poor boy's disgrace, and father's disappointment that grieves me; but I cannot talk about it any longer today, so please excuse me," and she abruptly left the room.

In the seclusion of her own chamber the last shred of composure forsook her and with a groan she covered her face with her hands and wept, while her aching heart sent up a prayer for help in her hour of trial.

“How odd Salome is,” muttered Caroline Holden to herself as she walked swiftly homeward. “I never did understand her. Well, the money will be Philip’s anyway, and he’s earned it too, I guess.”

Salome Rogers and Caroline Holden were sisters, although as totally unlike as if born of different parents. Brought up in the thriving village where they still resided, their lives had yet run in different channels. Both were married at an early age, but Salome’s happiness was but short-lived, for a widow’s cap soon covered her golden locks, while a soldier’s grave hid the form of her beloved one. Only her year-old baby boy with his father’s eyes and smile was left to remind her of her brief dream of bliss. Sheltered in the home of her childhood, she lived a life of quiet self-denial, tenderly caring for her aged parents in their declining years, and feeding her hungry heart on the love of her noble boy. With Caroline, life had been more prosperous. Her husband, a shrewd business man, had accumulated a considerable property during the late war, and with true Yankee thrift had invested to such good advantage, that at the time our story opens he held the deeds of nearly a third of the property of the little village of N——.

Three sons had blessed this union. Philip, the oldest, was at this time twenty years of age, and a year younger than his cousin Harold. Both boys were bright, intelligent, and wide-awake, though as different in looks and disposition as the two women who bore them. Harold Rogers was a broad shouldered, golden-haired young giant, six feet high, with fearless blue eyes and a sunny smile. Warm hearted, generous and impulsive, he was a favorite with all who knew him. A bright scholar and quick to learn, he was yet too fond of active life ever to become a great student of books. Thus it was that his cousin Philip, though a year younger, had kept pace with him in his school life and was prepared to enter college the same year. Slight of build, with dark hair and eyes, a sallow complexion and a quiet reserved manner, Philip Holden was almost the opposite in tastes and disposition from his cousin.

Intensely fond of study he was extremely ambitious of securing every honor that would fall to him through a high scholarship. The cousins, however, were much attached to each other, seemingly drawn the closer together by the dissimilarity of their natures.

Grandfather Martin, the father of Salome and Caroline, was a clear-headed, far-seeing old gentleman, and very fond of his grandchildren. From their childhood he had watched with interest the two boys Harold and Philip, studied their dispositions, and speculated as to their future; and while his heart was drawn more toward Harold, his pride was gratified in the scholarly attainments of Philip, who so determinedly kept pace with his elder cousin. Desirous of giving a new incentive to study on Harold's part, and having great confidence in his abilities if he would but apply himself more closely, grandfather Martin had placed the sum of five thousand dollars in the village bank to be given to the boy who graduated with the highest honors, and should they leave college with the same scholarly standing the money was to be divided between them. With no prospects for the future save what should come to him through his own energy and ability, Harold Rogers had determined to win the prize.

At the university in C—— the two cousins had passed three years of hard work, keeping shoulder to shoulder in the race for honors, till it had grown to be a question which would win the five thousand dollars. It was nearing the middle of the last year in their college course, when, like a thunderbolt falling in the midst of the quiet home life, came the news that Harold Rogers was expelled from college for some misdemeanor at present shrouded in mystery. Following the letter from the Faculty announcing his expulsion, there came a letter from Harold to his mother, so wild in tone, so incomprehensible in its half explanations, that poor Salome's heart ached for her boy, and she could only wait with an unutterable longing for his home-coming. Grandfather Martin's rage and disappointment knew no bounds, and in his anger he said

many bitter things to his unhappy daughter, utterly refusing to have anything more to do with his grandson or his grandson's future.

In the home of Caroline Holden there was one member of the household whose girlish heart was filled with grief and pity for Harold, and who secretly longed to comfort his mother with the assurance of her continued faith in his honor. Ruth Holden was Deacon Holden's ward and the orphan child of his only brother, whose death had left her to the care of her uncle and his wife. Having no daughter of her own, Caroline Holden had learned to love the beautiful young girl, whose bright face and sweet disposition seemed like a ray of sunlight in the home life.

With a snug little bank account of her own, Ruth was in no way dependent on her uncle for her maintenance, and, alas! for poor human nature, the said bank account was not the least of her charms in the eyes of her relatives.

The shadows of an early twilight were swiftly gathering, when Harold Rogers walked up the path that led to the old farm-house, and pushing open the door, soon held his mother in his arms.

"Harold, my poor boy, what have you done?" said Salome, kissing him tenderly.

"Disgraced myself and my family, so the Faculty say," answered Harold bitterly.

"I cannot believe it, my son. Tell me it is not true."

"No, mother, it is not true; and as God hears me I am not guilty of the crime laid at my door."

And Harold Rogers's honest blue eyes looked fearlessly into his mother's face.

"I know it, dear, I trust you fully. But tell me, Harold, what is this dreadful thing you are accused of?"

Then in the gloaming of that summer's night, with his head pillowed in his mother's lap as in the days of his childhood, Harold told the whole miserable story. Professor Blank, one of the Faculty of C—— University, suddenly missed his pocket-book one day, containing some important papers, and quite a

large amount of money in bank bills. Not finding it after a diligent search through the college grounds, he made inquiries of the students, but, apparently, no one had seen it. Each of the bank bills had a small red cross in one corner which Professor Blank had placed there out of curiosity to see if these bills would ever return to his hands after once leaving them. A week passed by, when one day while the Professor was paying for his lunch at a little restaurant close to the college grounds, one of the marked bills was handed to him in change for a larger one. With a start he recognized the red cross, and pointing it out to the man in charge, asked him if he had noticed it, and if he could remember who had passed the bill? The man said yes to both questions, and said that Harold Rogers had given him the bill only the day before in payment for his dinner. After consulting with the rest of the Faculty, the Professor decided to search Harold's room while he was absent, and on doing so, the pocket-book was found at the bottom of his trunk, and every bill was there save the one he had passed at the restaurant.

Harold's protestations of innocence were all in vain; the evidence was too strong against him, and though the affair was not to be made public they decided that his expulsion was absolutely necessary, and a just punishment for his crime. Harold's voice was husky with suppressed feeling as he finished his bitter tale, while the tears fell from his mother's eyes on to his bowed head.

"Do you remember how you came by that bill, Harold?" said his mother at last.

"Yes, Philip came to me that very morning and asked me to change a bill for him. I did so, and after he had gone I noticed the red cross in one corner."

"Philip!" cried Salome in a smothered voice, and Harold, lifting his head, the eyes of mother and son met in the gathering darkness; then with a cry of, "My poor, poor boy!" a long silence fell between them.

The moonlight lay in silvery patches along the quiet country

road, and made gigantic shadows of the two figures that were slowly walking amid the dewy stillness. The soft murmur of their voices sounded clear on the evening air, and an inquisitive robin sprang up from her nest and perching on the bough of an apple tree beneath which the shadows had paused, seemed to be listening eagerly.

“Did you believe me guilty, Ruth?” said the taller shadow.

“Never, Harold,” said the other with a trustful look upward.

“If grandfather would have more faith in me,” said the tall shadow with a sigh. “Well, he may think differently, some day, and meanwhile I am going away to make my fortune. Will you wait, dear Ruth, till I can earn a home for you?”

“As long as you wish,” answered the other softly.

As the sweet girl face was lifted up in the moonlight, the tall shadow bent to meet it, and the robin, no doubt shocked at the sight, fluttered noisily back into her nest.

The parting between mother and son was a sad and bitter one, yet Salome Rogers felt that it was best for her boy that he should seek new fields till the shadow of disgrace, that at present clouded his fair name, should be removed.

So, leaving the home of his childhood, the mother whose love had been his all, and the new hopes that had come to him in his young manhood, Harold took the burden of his future into his own hands, and in a western town commenced life anew. Believing, with the sublimity of a mother’s love, in her boy’s integrity, Salome once more took up the thread of her lonely existence, waiting with infinite patience the dawn of brighter days. Sympathizing with Harold’s mother in her anxiety and sorrow, Ruth Holden confessed to “Aunt Salome” as she had been wont to call her, the secret of her love. Salome’s tender heart went out to the fair young girl who was her son’s choice, and together the two women waited and prayed for the absent one.

The weeks and months sped on, and Philip Holden’s college days were over. With graceful ease he had carried off the highest honors of his class, and flushed and triumphant,

had returned to his village home, there to receive the proud congratulations of his parents and friends. A check for five thousand dollars was placed in Philip's hand by his grandfather, yet his words of praise sounded cold and forced. It was from the lips of his cousin Ruth, however, that Philip longed, with an intensity of feeling little dreamed of by that innocent maiden, for the praise that would pay him for his greatest efforts.

Throwing himself on the grass at her feet, as she sat one day in the garden, he gazed up at her with an odd expression in his dark eyes. The July sunshine lay warm about them, and the air was full of the scent of roses. Pulling a fragrant blossom from the bush close by, Ruth tossed it, with a mischievous laugh, into the upturned face, saying roguishly,

"What a tragic look, cousin Philip."

Philip caught the rose with a swift gesture, and crushed it almost fiercely in his hand as he said in a low, earnest voice,

"Why do you not congratulate me, Ruth? Are you not pleased at my success?"

"Of course I am, Phil," answered Ruth, a little constrainedly, "are we not all very proud of our college boy?"

"Pshaw! Ruth, that isn't saying you care, and, oh! heavens, I would rather have you care than all the rest of the world put together," and springing up Philip seized his cousin's hands and holding them in a close grasp he went on breathlessly, "You think me only a boy, Ruth Holden, but I have a man's heart in my breast and I love you as truly and deeply as though I was thirty instead of twenty."

Surprised, and a little frightened at Philip's wild manner, Ruth forced herself from his hold.

"Hush! cousin Philip, you must not say such things to me, I will not listen," and she turned to leave him; but Philip caught her almost rudely by the arm and pushed her back into the garden chair.

"You must listen to me, Ruth, I cannot keep still any longer, for I have loved you ever since we were children, and have

dreamed, and planned, and worked with the one thought that some day you would be my wife. Have you no love for me, dear, dear Ruth?"

"You forget, Philip, that we are cousins, and as such it would be wrong for us to marry; besides, I could never care for you in the way you desire, for I—I love another," and Ruth's face grew as crimson as the roses beside her."

"Is it Harold Rogers?" cried Philip fiercely, his eyes glowing with a jealous fire, while his sallow cheek grew pale.

"You have no right to ask, Philip, and I'll not answer your question," said Ruth defiantly.

"Ha! Ha! I congratulate you on your choice, cousin Ruth. Harold Rogers, the thief," and Philip laughed scornfully.

"How dare you say such a thing. Harold is not a thief and you know it. But if he were I would marry him before I would a coward and a slanderer like Philip Holden," said Ruth passionately, and wrenching herself from her cousin's hold she fled from his presence.

Almost beside himself with jealousy and disappointment, Philip started off for a long tramp in the woods, as if to hide in the depths of the gloomy forest the evil spirits that had taken possession of him. The silence of midnight had settled over the little village when the sound of carriage wheels rattling up to the farmhouse door, aroused Salome Rogers from her slumbers. Hastening to open it, she was met by two of the neighboring farmers bringing in their arms the apparently lifeless form of her nephew, Philip Holden.

"What has happened?" she cried in alarm.

"We found him lying unconscious beside the road on the outskirts of the wood," answered one of the men. "He must have accidentally shot himself, for his gun was lying beside him and there is a deep wound in his right side."

At these words Salome's motherly heart took instant fright, and without further questioning, she helped to get the poor boy into bed, while the men hastened to bring a physician and to notify his parents of the accident that had befallen their boy. For many days Philip's life was despaired of, but at

last the deadly bullet, that had narrowly escaped a vital part, was found, and though weak from the loss of blood, he was pronounced out of danger. Then it was that the spirit of remorse urged the unhappy boy to unburden his heart of its weight of guilt, and calling his aunt to his side he whispered faintly,

"It was not an accident, aunt Salome, I shot myself intentionally."

"Oh! Philip! why should you do such a thing?" said aunt Salome shocked and distressed.

"It was dreadfully wicked I know, but I did not want to live without Ruth's love. But Harold is far more worthy of her than I am, for it is I who should be branded a thief and not cousin Harold."

Salome Rogers's heart gave a great bound, and calling her sister Caroline from the next room, together they listened to the boy's confession. It was he who had found the Professor's pocketbook, and in his jealousy of Harold, who was fast outstripping him in the race for honors, the mad scheme to ruin his cousin's career had flashed into his mind, and hushing the voice of his conscience he had carried it out, with what success we all know.

Like the golden key that opens the door of Paradise, seemed that brief telegraphic dispatch that came to Harold Rogers in that far-off western town.

"Come home, your honor is vindicated."

As slow as a snail seemed the lightning express that bore him back to his native place, but the end of his journey was reached at last. Then, amid the general rejoicings that followed his arrival, he forgave and forgot the misery of the past six months.

"The money is yours by right," said Philip, handing Harold the check for the five thousand dollars, "I never could have won it fairly."

With a feeling he could not explain, Harold refused to take it, so it was decided to divide the sum between them, and thus the matter was settled. A little later and grandfather Martin

had passed to his long home, leaving the bulk of his fortune to his daughter Salome, whose tender care had brightened his declining years.

In this world of joy and sorrow, clouds and sunshine, life's changes follow swiftly one upon the other, and oft the clang of wedding bells drowns the last solemn strains of the funeral march. Thus it was that a quiet little wedding took place before many months had elapsed, and Ruth Holden became Ruth Rogers, and with Harold and his mother left the village of N—— for a new home in the far west. In the years of prosperity and happiness that followed, Salome Rogers's heart grew young again, and amid the household spirits that brightened the home of Harold and Ruth, purest and brightest of all shone that mother's faithful love.

ALMOST I DOUBTED.

Almost I doubted, Lord. My heart was sore
With many griefs, nor could I seem to rise
Above the cares that weighed me down. Mine eyes
Were blind to all thy mercies, all the store
Of blessings round my path; and Faith's pure door
Seemed closed against me, and blackness filled my skies.
When, lo! my vision clears, and hope swift flies
To light my way, and darkness reigns no more;
And through the clouds I lift mine eyes above,
Where shines the glorious brightness of thy face.
No more I'll doubt thy wisdom or thy love,
But humbly trust thy never-failing grace.
And from the ashes of my weak despair
Shall rise a faith more strong, more pure and fair.

A CHRISTMAS JUMBLE.

The Rev. Samuel Simpson was helping his wife pack Christmas boxes. There were three of them, good-sized wooden boxes, of about the same dimensions. Although his mind was occupied with his unwritten sermon, he listened, with praiseworthy patience, to the good woman's talk, as she sorted and arranged the contents of each box.

"I do hope that Sabina Goodnow will accept these things in the right spirit," said she, carefully folding a large woolen shawl, and placing it on one of the boxes, where already reposed a pretty flannel wrapper, together with a pair of crocheted slippers and a warm hood. "But Sabina 's so proud that I sometimes think she'd rather freeze than accept a favor from any one. However, it being Christmas, I've ventured to send her something useful. It does seem so senseless to give pin-cushions and tidies to people who need warm clothing."

"So I thought, when I counted thirteen pin-cushions in the box the society have just gotten ready to send to the foreign mission," said the minister a little dryly.

Maria Simpson laughed, though she colored, too.

"They are all stuffed with meal instead of bran, though, Samuel," said she quickly.

"A wise provision, truly," said her husband smiling. "But is Sabina to have this also" continued he, holding up a large wax doll with golden curls and staring blue eyes.

"Of course not, that belongs in the box I'm going to send to the Hawley children. I've gotten each of the boys a nice warm suit of clothes, and a dress and hood for little Mollie. A few toys won't do them any harm either. Dear me, Samuel, what will become of those poor children? It does worry me so to think of their being all alone in that old farm house with no one to care for them."

"The Lord will not forget them, Maria," said the minister, softly.

"Neither will I, Samuel," answered his wife, warmly. "Perhaps I'm making a mistake in sending a box to Silas Colby, for people say that he really is worth considerable money in spite of his seeming poverty," continued she, folding up a gay-colored dressing-gown, and placing it, with a pair of woolen slippers, in the bottom of the box. "I'm going to send him your last year's overcoat, Samuel, for he did not wear one all last winter, and he looked so cold every time I saw him drive by to the village. I do hope he won't feel offended," and the kind-hearted woman sighed.

A little later the three boxes were securely nailed and ready for marking.

"Now, Samuel, won't you please mark these boxes for me, for I am due at a teachers' meeting shortly, and really must be going," said Mrs. Simpson, then adding as she left the room, "You remember which is which, don't you, Samuel?"

"Oh, yes!" answered her husband, confidently. And then he slowly and carefully wrote the wrong address on every one of those boxes.

In a small cottage house, some two miles out of the village of A—— dwelt Sabina Goodnow, tailoress. She was a single woman of middle-age, and came from some of the finest old New England stock.

In the long ago, the Goodnows had been a family of considerable means and position in the country where they resided. But circumstances, over which we poor mortals have so little control, brought about many changes, till the little house with its tiny garden plot was all that remained to her of a once handsome patrimony. Situated as it was, on the outskirts of the old Goodnow estate, she could look from her vine-shaded window far across rich fields, and see the roofs of the substantial old farmhouse and outbuildings which had once belonged to her family, but which was now owned by one Silas Colby, a silent, reserved man of rather miserly habits. In spite of herself, a feeling of bitterness would often fill her heart, as

she thought of this man and the change the years had wrought in the rosy-cheeked lad, who had been her happy schoolmate in the days gone by. For many years a cold reserve had grown, like a wall of ice, between them, until but the briefest of nods was given in recognition when chance brought them together. Sabina's life was a busy one, however, for, in order to keep the wolf from that humble door, her needle flew swiftly, and she had but little time for idle musing.

And now the short December days had vanished one by one till the anniversary of that happy morn when

Bethlehem's star shone clear and bright,
In the dawn of a winter's day

was at hand. Loudly the Christmas bells rang out their hopeful message from the belfry of the village church. Gloriously the sun shone, and turned to brightest jewels the icicles that fringed the roof of Sabina's little porch, and dazzled her eyes as she opened the door in answer to a loud knock.

"Hello, Miss Goodnow! Merry Christmas!" said Sam Peters, the village truckman, as he dropped a wooden box upon the step at Sabina's feet. "Some one's sent you a Christmas box, an' I've got two more to deliver just like it," and away he went, whistling merrily.

Dragging the box into her little sitting-room Sabina quickly produced hammer and screw driver, and with a lonely woman's aptitude, soon opened the box.

"Dear me, what does this mean!" exclaimed she, lifting out a man's heavy overcoat, woolen muffler an cap. "These things can't be meant for me. There must be some mistake," but no, there in written letters, with the blackest of ink, was "Miss Sabina Goodnow," on the wooden cover.

Of course her woman's curiosity prompted her to examine the gay-colored dressing gown and slippers, and then her sharp eyes spied nestling in one corner a small paper-covered tract. Turning its first leaf she read, "Silas Colby, from his Pastor."

As if it were a live coal she dropped the innocent tract and sprang to her feet.

“The idea of the minister sending Silas Colby a Christmas box of clothing!” exclaimed she, her eyes and cheeks suddenly growing warm. “Why that man hoards up every year more money than the whole of Parson Simpson’s salary. It’s no wonder people think he’s poor, though, he will go looking so shabby. This box just serves him right an’ I hope it ’ll make him feel ashamed of his miserly ways. Dear me, money must be the root of all evil, truly, it has changed Silas so, for he used to be one of the most generous-hearted boys in school. Well, I’m goin’ straight down to the village and see Parson Simpson, and tell him his box has got into the wrong pew this time.” As she spoke, she swiftly gathered up the offending garments, folded and placed them in the box, and then hastily preparing herself for her two-mile walk, she stepped out into the clear, cold air.

Meanwhile, in the roomy old kitchen of Silas Colby’s farmhouse, that person was bending over another open box, while surprised exclamations forced themselves from his usually reserved lips.

“Well, I snum! if this aint the queerest Christmas box ever sent to an old bach! Any one ’d suppose that I had a house full o’ small fry by the looks o’ these jimcracks,” said he, lifting out, with clumsy fingers, a large wax doll that smiled up into his face with unabashed sweetness. A pair of skates, a ball and two jack-knives came next, together with a good big package of candy and nuts. Then he took up and examined with much apparent interest the nice warm clothing the minister’s wife had so carefully prepared. At last he came to three bright-colored Christmas cards, and as he studied them earnestly he read aloud the names written upon each: “John Hawley, Tommy Hawley, Molly Hawley, from their teacher, Maria Simpson.”

“Oh, ho, that’s who the box is for, sure! An’ a mighty nice present, too! But how Santa Claus happened to drop the box down my chimney is a mystery to me. Well, no matter how

it got here, it won't stay much longer, for I'm a-goin' to hitch up an' carry it over to them poor little children that hav'n't any mother or father to make a Christmas for them, an' I'll add a little something on my own account, too!" and the so-called miser took from his shabby pocket-book a ten-dollar note and placed it carefully in the pocket of the coat meant for the eldest Hawley boy. A little later his sleighbells were jingling merrily, as he and the box were carried swiftly along the country road toward the Hawley farm. Suddenly a curve in the road brought him face to face with Sabina Goodnow, as she walked briskly over the crisp snow toward the village. The usual cool nod was given and returned, when an irresistible impulse made Silas draw in his horse.

"Wish you a merry Christmas, Sabina," said he, a little diffidently.

Sabina paused and glanced at him with cold surprise.

"Thank you, Silas; I wish you the same," answered she, slowly. Then, as her eye fell upon the familiar looking box, she added, quickly: "Where are you goin' this morning, Silas?"

"That's just what I wanted to tell you, Sabina," said he, brightening up at the change in her tone, and in a few words he related the incident of the Christmas box. As she listened, a peculiar expression came over Sabina's face, and she laughed softly.

"I guess Parson Simpson was thinking of something else when he marked his wife's Christmas boxes," said she, "for Sam Peters brought one to my house this morning, too. And though my name was on the cover, your name was in the inside of the box."

"Sho! you don't say," answered Silas, wonderingly. "I'm sure it's mighty clever of the Parson's wife to send me a Christmas box. What was in it, Sabina?"

Sabina Goodnow's sharp eyes glanced quickly at the man's shabby coat, and a stinging retort was on her lips, but as she met the kindly, honest glance bent upon her, she hesitated.

"Suppose you drive over and get it, Silas, and see for yourself," answered she, slowly.

"Well, just as you say, Sabina," said Silas, evidently pleased with the chance to call at the little cottage. "But I guess it'll keep till I've been over to the Hawleys' with this box. Say, Sabina, you don't feel like goin' along with me, do you? Seems to me a woman's face would be mighty welcome to them poor little motherless critters?"

"Why, yes, Silas, I'll go with you, an' be glad to," answered she, stepping briskly into the sleigh. "I've been thinkin' for some time I'd get over there an' see to them children myself. It's near two months now, since their mother 'n' father died, an' it aint right for them to be left alone there any longer. If the selectmen don't do something about it pretty soon I'm a-goin' to take em all home with me an' take care on 'em myself," continued she, earnestly, as they drove along.

Silas glanced admiringly at the trim figure beside him.

"Your heart 's in the right place, Sabina, sure," said he, cordially.

"I hope so, Silas, an' it aint made of stone, either," answered she.

Where is there a more desolate looking object, in all this great world of ours, than a tumble-down old farmhouse, in the winter! Shorn of its picturesque covering of vines and flowers, it stands bare and bleak, with falling shingles, and loosened clapboards. Its shutterless windows stare out over the frozen hilltops with the pitiful glance of sightless eyes, and with its crumbling fences, its rotting well-sweep, it is a blot upon the landscape.

Before just such a ruined homestead, Silas Colby and Sabina Goodnow paused, and with the Christmas box between them they walked into the house. The sight that greeted them was certainly a surprise, for there, in the midst of that gloomy kitchen, stood Maria Simpson's third Christmas box. Gathered about it, with disappointed faces, were the three children, while its contents were strewn over the floor. Ten-years-old Johnny, with his hands in his trousers' pockets, looked the

picture of manly scorn, though Tommy's eight years could not quite suppress his quivering lips and tear-dimmed eyes, and poor little Molly, with her face buried in the folds of the woolen wrapper, was sobbing bitterly.

Silas dropped the box he carried, with a surprised exclamation, but the puzzled look in Sabina's face suddenly changed to one of conviction, as, with but a brief greeting for the startled children, she bent over the box. Yes, there it was, the little paper-covered tract, and "Sabina Goodnow, from her Pastor," was written upon its first page. The swift uprising of that inherent pride, of the true New England woman, threw a tone of bitterness into Sabina's voice, as she said:

"Well, Maria Simpson 's done her duty this year, if she never did before. These things are meant for me, Silas," added she, showing him the tract.

"That's so, Sabina, an' I'm right glad for you, too," said he, with a man's usual obtuseness at the working of a woman's mind.

The Hawley children's disappointment was soon changed to gladness, as the contents of their rightful Christmas box were disclosed to them: and could the Parson's good wife have listened to their shouts of joy and merry laughter, she might well feel satisfied that one at least of her Christmas boxes was truly and honestly appreciated. Silas and Sabina busied themselves all that lovely Christmas day in making more comfortable the home of the little orphans. No thought of the strangeness of their position seemed to occur to either of them, for, forgetful of self, they worked, with a singleness of purpose, in caring for those of whom it is said, "Of such is the kingdom of Heaven."

In the early twilight they drove up to Sabina's little cottage home, and as they stepped inside, Silas said,

"Well, now, Sabina, I suppose I can see what Parson Simpson 's sent me for Christmas."

"Yes, Silas, you can, an' I hope you'll accept it in the right spirit," answered Sabina, unconsciously quoting Maria Simpson's words in regard to herself.

"Of course I will, Sabina," said he, but when he took up the minister's cast-off coat, a dark red stole up into his sunburned face. For a moment he did not speak, while his eyes fell upon his own shabby clothes, and his color mounted higher.

"Do I look so dreadfully poverty-stricken, Sabina?" questioned he at last.

"Yes, Silas, you do," answered she with unflinching honesty.

Silas carefully folded the coat, and placed it back in the box. Then seating himself, he turned to Sabina with a face from which the color had faded, leaving it pale and stern.

"It's mighty hard for a man to be misunderstood, and called a miser, just because he doesn't choose to wear fine clothes, or to explain his business to the whole county. But it cuts me the worst, Sabina, to be misjudged by you of all others, for it's for you I've been a savin' and hoardin' up the income of the old place all these years," said he.

"For me! why Silas Colby!" cried Sabina astonished.

"Yes, an' when I die the whole on 't belongs to you. It never did seem right that the last o' the Goodnows should be kept out of the property, an', an', well years ago, when we was both younger, I used to thing that perhaps you'd be willin' to take me along o' the place. But you've been so sort o' distant an' independent these late years, I've sort o' given that up."

Sabina's eyes fell before the earnest gaze of the man before her.

"I never dreamed of such a thing, Silas," murmured she in a low voice.

"No, I don't suppose you ever did, Sabina. I was always such a plain sort of a man, 'taint likely you could a-done it, anyhow."

Silas paused, and Sabina's color rose to a warm crimson.

"But, Silas, you should have asked me and found out," she said quickly.

Silas Colby sprang to his feet.

“You don’t mean to tell me you’d a-said ‘yes,’ do you, Sabina?” he almost shouted.

Just what she did say is really no business of ours, but that it was satisfactory to Silas the sequel proves, for a few weeks later the Rev. Samuel Simpson made them man and wife. Having given the minister the usual fee, Silas handed him a substantial check, saying,

“Just you distribute that among your poor folks, Parson, all except the Hawley children, for Sabina ’n’ I are a-goin’ to adopt the three on ’em an’ take ’em to live with us.”

The astonished Parson and his good wife discussed at length the strange turn of affairs among their supposed poor people, but they never knew it had all been brought about by the jumble the minister had made with those Christmas boxes.

TO DOROTHY.

I would not that thy skies be always fair,
My Dorothy, or that thy path with flowers
Be strewn; but that God’s blessed sun and showers
In equal measure fall. ’Tis this my prayer.
For if thou knew not aught of pain or care,
Thou couldst not taste so sweet a joy as ours,
Who, having both, accepting each as dowers
From God, find Him revealed, and thus our share
Of joy, outweighing pain, grows sweet and pure.
And if thou ne’er wert tempted—’tis no gain
To conquer where no foes attack; but sure
Of grace above, the fiercest foes are slain.
And Dorothy, I would thy heart with love
Be filled; and, lastly, dwell with God above.

AUNT CALISTA'S VALENTINE.

How it snowed! Faster, and faster fell the tiny flakes, whirling about in the air in a wild dance, before settling into great white drifts along the roadside.

Alas! that such a storm should have come upon the night of St. Valentine. Surely it was enough to cool the ardor of Cupid himself. But, heedless, of the whirling flakes, the arrows of that sturdy little god were flying about in all directions, finding the tender spots in human hearts, as they have in ages past and will for long years to come. Doorbells were ringing, while youthful feet were scampering amid half suppressed laughter.

On the corner of a pretty street, in a comfortable little village, was a small white cottage house. The snow-flakes had piled high against the windows and doors, yet failed to hide the shining door-plate that told who dwelt within. "Calista Curtis, Dressmaker" it read, and there was not a person in that whole village but what was proud of that name, or who did not feel an interest in the busy little spinster who bore it. A plump, fresh-complexioned, happy-dispositioned woman who carried her thirty-five years with the air of a girl, yet being a bit old-fashioned she never sought to conceal her age, or seemed conscious of her own youthful looks. The owner of said cottage, with a good business and a snug sum laid by for a rainy day, she seemed content to spend her days in single blessedness. For though both bachelor and widower had sought to alter this decision, her answer was always the same. If in the golden days of youth there had been a lover who had gained what they could not, none knew it, for Calista Curtis was not one to wear her heart upon her sleeve. With a married sister living near, whose boy and girl called her "Aunt Calista", the name had grown familiar to all; and was often good-naturedly used by other than her own kin.

The little sitting-room all aglow with fire and lamplight, seemed a bower of comfort to Calista as she listened to the snow dashing against the window-panes and whirling around the corner of the house. Many had been the pranks the children had played upon her all day, till the ringing of the door-bell brought only a smile to her lips as she bent over her sewing, while her needle flew the faster. Suddenly a long, loud peal of the bell caused her to spring from her chair with an impatient cry:

“They’ll break the bell-wire if they don’t look out,” muttered she hurrying to the door. A gust of wind extinguished the light as she peered into the darkness. The storm beat in her face, and she was about to turn back, when her foot stumbled against something that stood upon the step close to the open door. Surprised, she bent and saw a large market basket, covered, and with a card attached to the handle. “I’d like to know what those children will do next!” said Calista, as she tugged at the heavy basket, half carrying, half dragging it into the lighted room. “Mercy! how heavy it is. Guess it’s a mess of puppies, or a settin’ hen, or—” by this time the cover was off and Calista dropped to the floor in astonishment. Nestling amid warm blankets securely wrapped about it, was a plump baby girl, fast asleep. A card was pinned to its dress, and her astonishment grew more intense as she read its written message:

“A Valentine for Aunt Calista.” Wonderingly she gazed at the sleeping child, whose regular breathing and softly flushed cheeks told of the slumber of perfect health. Golden curls clustered about the little round head, and silken lashes of deeper brown fringed the white eyelids. Between the rosy parted lips tiny white teeth were visible, while the rounded chin showed the touch of the angel’s kiss, in the sweetest dimple imaginable.

“You precious little beauty, who are you and where did you come from?” at length burst from Calista as she lifted the baby from its warm nest and rose to her feet. Up flew the

white lids, and two great brown eyes looked wonderingly into her face, and the rosy lips took a downward curve.

"There, there, baby, don't cry," said Calista, kissing the grieved lips and walking swiftly about the room as she soothed its fears. Evidently Miss Baby was used to this sort of treatment, for she immediately burst into a gurgling laugh, plunged her chubby fists into Calista's hair, and kicked her small feet against her in wild glee.

"Where did you come from, you jolly little witch?" cried she, pausing for breath, but baby only crowed the louder, giving her hair a final twitch which loosened it till it fell in a great coil to her waist. With a laughing shake of the little rogue, Calista placed her on the floor while she gathered up her hair, and examined more closely the contents of the basket. To her surprise it was closely packed with the baby's wardrobe, all of the finest material and dainty needlework. Then beneath the whole was an envelope addressed to herself. Her fingers trembled as she lifted it and for an instant a feeling of dread took possession of her. Was it a presentiment of coming evil? Who can tell? A slip of paper fell from the envelope as she tore it open, and her startled eyes saw that it was a check for one hundred dollars. A closely written page followed, and as she devoured the words, every particle of her rich coloring faded from her cheeks.

Motionless, as if turned to stone, she stared at the paper in her hand, till the soft touch of the baby's hand brought her to herself. With a sudden rush of tears, she gathered the child into her arms and bowed her head against its sweet face.

"Oh! my lost youth," she cried brokenly.

A little later, and the new arrival was quietly sleeping in the midst of Calista's bed, while that good woman bent over the innocent baby with such a look of loving kindness, of unselfish devotion, that could its own parents have seen it they would have known that their darling was in good hands.

"I accept the trust," whispered Calista softly, "and may God so do to me, if in aught I fail thee my sweet little Valentine."

As every one knows, it often happens that sisters are decidedly opposite in both character and personal appearance, and so it was with Calista Curtis and her sister Alvira Cummings. Although wife and mother, Alvira was what people call "a born old maid." Sharp featured, sharp tongued, and prim in all her ways, a model housekeeper, to be sure, yet utterly devoid of that faculty which makes the true home.

The mistress of one of the smartest houses in the village, the wife of a well-to-do-farmer, she yet toiled early and late. Her two children, a boy of eight and a girl of six, were respectively called, Rob and Sally. Passionately fond of their Aunt Calista, the little cottage was often the scene of such childish revelries as were never allowed them in their own prim home.

"Ma, ma!" cried Rob, bursting into the kitchen and tracking the snow over the spotless floor, "Aunt Calista 's got a baby."

"It tum in a basket," put in Sally, breathlessly, as she kicked the snow from her little shoes.

"Stop talking such nonsense, children, and go and wipe your feet," said Mrs. Cummings, as she marched them to the door.

"'Taint nonsense ma, it's a baby, a really, truly baby," said Rob, indignantly pulling away from his mother. "Aunt Calista says it's a valentine."

"A valentine is it, well, why do you call it a baby then?" said their mother impatiently.

"'Cos 'tis a baby," persisted Rob, a little sulkily. "Guess I know a baby when I hear it cry."

"Me hear it cy too," echoed Sally, her voice taking on a mournful note.

"I never heard such foolish talk as Calista has, even before those children. I'm just going to give her a piece of my mind," muttered Mrs. Cummings, her curiosity at last aroused. Hastily throwing on her outer garments she started for her sister's house, the two children following. The sight that met her eyes as she opened the door of the pretty cottage home so paralyzed her tongue, that for a moment she was speechless. In a rocker before a cozy open fire, sat Calista with the baby in her arms.

A bowl of water and other articles necessary for a child's bath were beside her. The half clad baby was laughing and throwing up its tiny hands to catch the drops of water as Calista softly bathed the rosy face. A smile of ineffable sweetness glorified her own features as she ministered to the little child in her arms. The noise of the opening door startled her, and for an instant her face was crimson as she turned it toward her sister.

"Calista Curtis, where did you get that child?" cried Alvira when she recovered her voice.

"It was left here last night during the storm. There is the basket it came in," answered Calista, quietly going on with her work.

"Well, I declare! if some folks ain't got the cheek. And you a single woman too," said Alvira, as she examined the basket and its contents. "Looks if they intended you to keep it too, by all these clothes."

"Yes, that is what I'm going to do," said Calista. Alvira sprang to her feet.

"You must be crazy to think of such a thing," cried she, excitedly. "What will folks think. An old maid like you?"

Calista flushed again at her sister's coarse tone.

"I cannot help what people think, Alvira, I couldn't be so cruel as to forsake the child placed in my care."

"It ain't any more cruel than its own parents were to send it here in a snow storm," answered her sister. "Ain't there no clue as to where it came from, or who its folks are?"

Calista's face was bent over the child in her arms as her sister spoke, and she made no reply.

"Mighty queer there ain't no name on these clothes," continued Alvira. "How old should you think the baby was?"

"About a year, it seems to me," answered Calista. "And I am going to call her Valentine."

Alvira Cummings looked at her sister a moment in silence.

"Well! if you ain't the softest fool out," cried she at last. "How are you going to do any business with a baby to take care of?"

"I shall do what I can and the rest must go," said Calista quietly.

"If I ain't mistaken, the most of it *will* go with that child on your hands," said her sister with a short laugh; "and mark my words, Calista Curtis, that valentine, as you call it, of yours, will bring you bad luck." With these words, she grasped the children by the hands and hurried out of the house.

A shiver swept over Calista as the door closed upon her, and for an instant a dark shadow seemed to settle over her spirit. Then as her eyes met the baby's wondering gaze, she smiled quickly into its questioning face.

"Good luck, or bad luck, 'tis all the same to me," said she, kissing it tenderly.

Like wildfire the news of Calista Curtis' strange valentine swept through the village. For many days the little cottage was besieged with callers.

Much surprise was expressed at her determination to keep the child, even after several offers had been made to provide it with a good home.

"The child was sent to me to care for and I will not betray the trust imposed upon me," she said quietly but firmly to one and all.

"But whose child can it be and why should it have been left at your door above all others?" they questioned.

"I cannot tell," answered Calista briefly.

Gradually a feeling that Calista knew more about the child than she was willing to disclose, took possession of them.

'Tis but a small thing that turns the current of the world's opinion.

A word dropped here and there, a shrug of the shoulders, a lifted brow, a significant smile, and the thing is done. For the first time in her life Calista Curtis felt that a shadow rested upon her. Cruel, unjust, malicious. The friendly glance became an inquisitive stare. The cordial voice held in it a tone of reserve, and the warm hand clasp grew limp and cold. One by one her customers dropped away till but few

remained. With the keen perception of a sensitive nature, Calista suffered cruelly. Not for an instant, however, did she waver in her faithful devotion to the child placed in her care. Day by day and week by week her love grew stronger, until those tiny, baby fingers held within their clasp the whole of her woman's loving heart. With the coming of each year, on the fourteenth of February, a letter was sent to Calista notifying her that a sum of money had been placed in the village bank to her credit, and always with this message: "To be used for Aunt Calista's Valentine."

And so the months and the years sped onward. From babyhood to girlhood, from girlhood to womanhood, came with swift transition. In spite of the mystery attached to her birth, Valentine Curtis was ever a favorite among the village people. Beautiful in form and feature and gifted with such qualities of mind and heart as one seldom finds, she was a queen among the simple village girls with whom she was reared. At an early age Calista had told her the circumstances of her being placed in her care, also of the money which was sent for her support and education.

"Never doubt the wisdom of your elders, Valentine," she had said in conclusion. "Believe in and trust to the affection which surrounds you, even though you know not its source, and in good time all will be made plain to you."

So, although dwelling in that humble cottage home, Valentine felt no lack of loving care, or the advantages which money supplies. With the passing years gossiping tongues had ceased to wag, and no cruel whisper had reached the ears of the child they had all learned to love for its own sweet sake. The impregnable wall of reserve which surrounded Calista, however, they could not overlook, for what village will forgive a mystery it cannot solve?

Sometimes our bitterest foes belong to one's own household. In her secret heart Alvira Cummings cherished a feeling of bitterness toward her sister for withholding from her what she believed she could tell—the secret of Valentine's birth. Jealously she watched the beautiful child blossom into a lovely

girl. Proud of her own children, she could not bear to find in this little waif richer gifts of nature than were given her own offspring.

Again it is the fourteenth of February and Valentine Curtis' eighteenth birthday. Unlike that other day so long ago, when, amid that bitter storm Calista had found her strange valentine, the sun shines gloriously, the air is clear and cold and filled with the sound of merry sleigh-bells. A natty little sleigh dashes up to the door of the cottage where dwells Calista Curtis, and out springs a handsome young man and runs up the steps, two at a time.

"Aunt Calista!" he calls, as he throws open the door unceremoniously. "Tell Val to hurry up, the sleighing is fine and it's too bad to lose a single moment."

"All ready, Rob," answers the sweetest voice in the world, and Val steps out to meet him. Such a radiant vision! Robert Cummings draws in his breath quickly, and his heart throbs with a deeper feeling than the cousinly regard he is supposed to cherish for this fair girl. Surely the promise of her childhood has been richly fulfilled. A skin of dazzling whiteness, with just a tinge of color on cheek and lip. Golden brown eyes full of brilliant lights, and hair of a soft, rich bronze, fine and soft, which clings in dainty rings about her face. Even white teeth show with every dimpling smile that parts the rosy lips, and who can wonder at the young man's folly. Added to these charms the plump little figure is clad in a tasty cloth suit, with fur-trimmed jacket and jaunty hat, a source of much satisfaction to Rob, who, having but lately returned from college, considered himself a good judge of female attire.

With the air of a princess Val steps into the sleigh and away they fly over the frozen ground, to the sound of jingling bells and merry laughter.

To Valentine Curtis and Robert Cummings has come the first intoxicating knowledge of mutual affection. To them that old, old story is marvelously sweet and beautiful. All the

world is glorified by love's tender glow. To them the present hour is joy unspeakable, while the future stretches out before them in one long vista of blissful delight.

In her cottage home sits Calista with an open letter in her hand. Her face is pale with intense suffering as she bends over its closely written pages. The letter reads:

My Dear Friend,

At last I am coming home to relieve you of the burden you have for so many long years borne for me. Faithfully and nobly have you kept the promise you gave one who is so unworthy of such generosity. No words can express the gratitude I feel for your unselfish devotion to my motherless child. You tell me that she has grown into a beautiful girl and that you love her as your own. God bless you for those words, my truest of friends. Surely it was His hand which guided me to you on that fearful night so long ago. If a man can expiate his youthful follies by years of self-denial and toil, then the mistake of my life is atoned for. But now I can bear the separation no longer, for while I am rich in money, I am poor, alas! so poor in affection's ties. I long to see my daughter, and to clasp hands once more with the truest and noblest woman man ever called his friend.

From your old friend and schoolmate,

JOHN DICKENSON.

Backward rolled the years from Calista as she read these lines. Visions of other days came before her eyes with startling vividness. Days when John Dickenson had been her play-fellow, schoolmate, and friend. Long summer days filled with youthful pleasures and sweeter dreams. Then John's trouble with his father, who was pastor of the little Baptist church, because of his refusal to follow in his father's footsteps. His sudden flight from home, with but one wild note to Calista.

No word of love had passed between them, yet Calista had never dreamed of a future but that as John Dickenson's wife. Years of silence, then that fearful night when, in the storm

and darkness, had come to her that dear child that had been the light of her life for so long. With trembling fingers she once more took from its hiding place that old letter which told her of John's marriage to a beautiful actress, the baby's birth, his wife's death and his return to his old home with his motherless child, only to find his parents dead, his home gone. Then in his despair he had turned to Calista, yet fearing a refusal of his request, he had conceived the idea of placing the child in her care as we have seen. With man's thoughtlessness he had pledged her to secrecy as to the baby's parentage, little dreaming of its effect on this good woman's life. And now he was coming to claim his own, to take from her the joy of her life. Was it not too cruel?

"I cannot bear it," she murmured, with bowed head and falling tears.

"For pity sakes what is the matter, Calista?" cried Alvira Cummings, walking into the room. "Who are your letters from? Any one dead?"

A wild desire to unburden her heart of the secret it had hidden so long, came over her, but a second thought told her to wait a little longer till the return of John Dickenson. Gathering up the letters, Calista folded and put them away without a word, her sister watching her curiously.

"You are mighty close-mouthed, Calista, I must say," said Alvira, a little bitterly. "You never tell your business to any one."

"Why should I?" answered Calista, quietly.

"Folks would think lots more of you if you did," said Alvira. "For my part I can't abide secrets anyhow."

At this moment sleigh-bells were heard and the two women glanced quickly out of the window. As the sleigh paused before the door, a dark flush swept over Alvira's face. Lifting his cousin from the sleigh with tender care, Robert and Valentine walked into the house with smiling, happy faces. As Robert's eyes fell upon his mother, he went swiftly to her

side and kissed her lovingly. Then holding out his hand to Valentine, who blushed deeply as she stood beside her lover, he said impulsively:

“Mother dear, Valentine has promised to be my wife. Am I not a lucky fellow?”

For an instant his mother's face was livid with suppressed rage. Then with an effort she controlled herself. Rising to her feet she said, coldly:

“You are a headstrong, foolish boy, Robert, to ask any girl to be your wife without my consent.”

“But, mother, you—you give it, of course, do you not?” he stammered, in his surprise, while Valentine grew pale as marble.

“Never, Robert Cummings, shall you marry that nameless waif with my consent!” answered she, bitterly, as she hastily left the house.

With a moan of intense anguish, Valentine turned from her lover and threw herself into Calista's arms.

“Tell me, tell me now, Aunt Calista, who am I?” she sobbed.

“Yes, darling, I will. It is too cruel to keep it from you longer,” answered Calista, holding the girl close. “And your father will be here shortly to prove my words, and to give you the name and home which are rightly yours.”

“My father!” exclaimed Valentine, while Robert, throwing himself into a chair, listened eagerly to his aunt's words.

Briefly, Calista told them the story so strange yet true. The shadows of an early twilight were gathering about the little group as they talked, and they heeded not the footsteps upon the walk outside. Not until the little maid of all work had ushered into their midst a tall stranger, did they waken from that long look into the past.

“Have you no welcome for me, Calista?” said a voice, that for so long had been dead to her ears, and Calista knew that John Dickenson stood before her.

It is a strange thing, this meeting after long years! With what eager, searching glances one seeks for a trace of that long ago youth! Ah, well! youth is but a transient thing, and

maturity has compensations it dreams not of. So, as these two, whom the years had so long divided, yet who were bound together by a mutual interest, gazed into each other's eyes, they felt that out of the mistakes of the past had come to them that which would lighten and bless all their future years.

The return of John Dickenson to his boyhood's home, and the strange story of his life, was a nine days' wonder in the village.

But when a few weeks later a double wedding was solemnized in which John Dickenson and Calista Curtis, Robert Cummings and Valentine Dickenson were the contracting parties, how the gossips' tongues did wag.

It was harmless gossip, however, and everybody was happy, even Alvira Cummings, whose hard heart was softened and made tender by the magic touch of the gold which would some day belong to Aunt Calista's Valentine.

TRUE LOVE.

True love lives on forever;
True love forsakes one never;
Midst time and tide, where'er abide,
Its chains no power can sever.

True love flies not from sorrow,
But ever seeks to borrow
A little cheer for those most dear,
And hopeth for the morrow.

EASTER HOPES.

The twilight shadows were darkening the corners of the little room where Persis Baldwin was sitting. Her bowed head with its loosened hair was held close to the piece of sewing in her lap. Swiftly her needle added a few more stitches, and then, with a long-drawn sigh, she leaned back in her chair.

The last rays of the setting sun still lingered in the western sky and threw a faint light across the girl's face as it was turned toward the window. Fair and sweet it was, with sunny hair and blue eyes that were full of dreams; untouched by sorrow or the world's wisdom, and yet strong and full of earnest purpose. Happy thoughts flew like summer birds through her mind, and her fingers rested caressingly against the work in her lap.

Her wedding dress! Ah! what a world of meaning is conveyed in three small words! Sweet and tender are the visions they bring to Persis' loving heart. Pure and holy her dreams of the future; exalted her ideal of wifhood and—

"Persis! Persis! are you never going to light the lamps and bring me my tea?" called out a querulous voice from an adjoining room.

"Yes, mother, I'm coming," answered Persis, springing up with a sudden start, and present duties sweep away the vision of future joys.

In the little village where dwelt Persis Baldwin and her widowed mother, the young girl was beloved by young and old. Left at an early age with the care of an invalid mother, she had acquired a sweet womanliness and the gentle patience that comes to those who in youth take up the burdens of life. With limited means, that required the exercise of considerable economy in the arrangement of their affairs, Persis and her mother were yet far removed from real poverty. A pretty

cottage on the outskirts of the village, together with a small income insufficient for their simple wants, placed the two women in the ranks of the "well-to-do" people of the place.

So it was that no social gathering seemed complete, no church fair, sewing-circle, or tea-party as successful or harmonious as when Persis Baldwin's sweet face and bright wit graced the occasion. Bound, as she was, by the ties of affection and duty to the bedside of the poor invalid, her opportunities for recreation were, however, few and far between.

From the time she was a little child Persis Baldwin and Wallace Newton were friends and companions. Her playmate and schoolmate in childhood, her friend and lover in girlhood, he had won at last the highest place a man can fill in a woman's heart, and was soon to be her husband. The coming Easter, now near at hand, was to see them made man and wife, and Persis' busy fingers had nearly completed the wedding dress and woven into every stitch her happy thoughts.

None but pleasant anticipations filled her mother's heart for Persis' future, for instead of losing her daughter she was to gain a beloved son in whom she was well pleased, and the life at the cottage would go on the same as before.

Wallace Newton had reached his twenty-fifth birthday without ever having been outside of the State in which he was born. The son of the village doctor, he had followed in his father's footsteps, studied under his direction for a time, and finally taken a course in a medical college, and was now a full-fledged M. D. In the first glamor of his love for Persis Baldwin, he had decided, for her sake, to hang out his sign and strive to build up a practice in the little village, and, as long as her mother lived, to dwell with them in their cottage home.

Cooler thoughts followed, however, and ambition pointed to broader fields of usefulness and larger and more golden rewards in the far West. Secretly jealous of Persis' devotion to her mother, and irritated by the thought of there being any hindrance to their freedom, he was not in the pleasantest of moods as he sat by the cheerful grate fire in Persis' cosy par-

lor one evening late in March. The blustering wind roared down the chimney and made the logs blaze up with a brilliant glow that played across the two youthful faces.

Save for the firelight the room lay in shadow, and Persis had failed to discern the faint scowl that lay between her lover's handsome, dark eyes. Her own eyes, filled with a tender light, were dreamily watching the glowing embers, and her round cheeks were growing a deeper carnation from the pleasant warmth. A long silence had fallen between them, when, with an impulsive movement, Wallace bent toward Persis, saying,—

“Do you realize that Easter is almost here, Persis?”

“Yes,” answered she softly, a dimple showing in one cheek.

“Are you glad, dear?” he continued, with his face close to hers.

Persis' eyes met his with a glance that was answered by a swift caress.

“But,” said Wallace, “you are to promise to love, honor and obey, and, according to Scripture, must be willing to leave father, mother, and all other friends, for my sake. Is your love strong enough for this, Persis?”

“How strangely you talk, Wallace,” said she, looking at him more earnestly in the dim light. “Surely you cannot doubt my love at this late hour!”

“No, no, Persis. I do not doubt your love,” said he, rising hastily and moving about the room. “But it has never been tested as I am about to test it. O my darling, do not fail me!” and he drew her toward him passionately.

A slight shiver of apprehension swept over Persis, yet she answered, calmly and sweetly,—

“I will not fail you, dearest. Tell me what you wish.”

With quick, nervous strides, Wallace moves about the little room, while Persis watches him with anxious eyes.

“I have had an offer of a large practice in a Western town,” he commenced, abruptly—“an offer that it would be the height of folly for me to refuse. I have no practice here, nor am I likely to have for many years. I know you thought to remain

here with your mother, but, dear, your first duty is to your husband. Do you not think so, Persis?" he ended, pleadingly.

Her first duty! Persis' heart began to beat heavily.

"I do not think that I quite understand you, Wallace," she said, slowly. "You wish to accept this offer, and to go out West to live after—after we are married, and you speak as if I must leave mother here."

A dark cloud swept over Wallace's face that, in spite of the dim light, Persis could not but see.

"She never could stand the journey," he muttered, quickly.

"I cannot leave her behind, Wallace."

"Why not, Persis? Other girls leave their parents when they marry, why should not you?"

"But mother is sick—and old—and alone." Persis' voice broke, and she covered her face with her hands.

"Your brother John should care for her; it is his place," continued Wallace, hardening his voice.

"Brother John has a delicate wife and four little children, who have the first claim to his care," murmured poor Persis through her wet fingers.

"And is a wife's duty less than the husband's? Should you not care for him before all else?" argued he, clumsily.

"Perhaps," answered Persis, dropping her hands from her face and looking at him with steady eyes. "But you forget, Wallace, that I have no husband yet."

"But you will have soon, dear," said he, tenderly.

A slow pallor crept over the girl's face, yet a steady light burned in her eyes.

"I think not, Wallace," said she, quietly.

Wallace Newton's face grew crimson with suppressed anger, and his eyes gleamed fiercely.

"Do not play the coquette, Persis," cried he, hotly. "I am too much in earnest to be trifled with."

"I have not trifled with you," said she, calmly.

"Yet you speak as though we were not to be married at Easter," said he.

"I cannot leave my mother."

"You will not, you mean!" cried he, angrily.

"I cannot!" she still murmured through white lips.

By this time the passionate anger that had taken possession of him was at white heat, and taking his coat and hat in his hand, he walked swiftly toward the door.

"So your love will not stand the test," said he, with a sneer.

"No, it will not stand the test," she repeated, mechanically.

"Then I give you back your promise. Good-bye."

The door opened and shut, and he was gone!

The smoldering log in the fireplace crumbled and fell with a fitful glare. The darkness of night settled over the girl's bowed head, and hid from all human eyes the bitterness of her grief.

Great was the surprise of the village people when the news of the broken engagement was spread abroad; and the sudden departure of the young M. D. added excitement to the general gossip. What was the real cause of the rupture between the young people no one could tell, for not even to her mother did Persis reveal the truth of the matter. With quiet patience she bore her fretful questionings, and bravely fitted her shoulders to the cross they must carry.

On Easter morning she filled her accustomed place in church, and listened with grave attention to the words of the sermon. Heedless of the curious glances cast in her direction, her responses were made in her usual clear tones, and as the choir sang, "Rejoice, rejoice, let all the earth rejoice," her heavy heart sought to rise above its selfish sorrow and join in the grand jubilee of earth's resurrection. Alas! poor human heart

The long summer days slowly passed into oblivion. The autumn foliage crimsoned, grew brown and sere, and fell to earth. But when the winter's snow whitened the housetops, Persis Baldwin's mother began to fail. The fatal disease that had so long held her in its grasp tightened its hold, and with a sinking at her heart Persis realized that she would soon be

motherless. Bitter was the agony of the long weeks that followed, when, even amid her constant anxiety for her poor mother, there would come that weary longing for the love and sympathy that had gone out of her life. Struggle as she would to dethrone her girlhood's ideal, her woman's heart had not yet learned its lesson of renunciation.

Surrounded by many kind friends among the village people, there was one among them who understood the girl's heart as none other. Alvin Douglas was not only a sincere friend to Persis and her mother, but for several years he had been her pastor. To him had been given the privilege of watching the growth of a beautiful Christian spirit in the young girl. His had been the hand that had made the cross of baptism upon her brow, and administered her first sacrament. It was to him that Persis had been wont to go for advice and guidance when trials, both spiritual and material, had assailed her; and yet, in the hour of her first real sorrow, she had closed her heart's chamber and sealed the door of her lips, that none but her God might see the grief within. But Alvin Douglas had not failed to read the girl's secret, nor his keen penetration to divine the real cause of Persis' broken engagement. Daily he watched her silent heroism, and while he sorrowed for her, he exulted in the sacrifice she had made. When the end came, and Mrs. Baldwin's long martyrdom was over, all that a true friend and faithful pastor could do to comfort her bereavement Alvin Douglas did for Persis Baldwin; yet it seemed to him but a drop from the ocean of pity that filled his heart.

The weeks slipped by, and spring has come again. Once more the frozen heart of winter is melted by April's smiles and tears. Once more the hidden life buried beneath the silent earth springs up anew and tells again the story of the resurrection in the shooting grass, the bursting buds, and the unlocked streams. Once more the anniversary of our Saviour's awakening is celebrated far and wide, and Easter Sunday dawns again upon the Christian world.

The little village church is sweet with the scent of flowers, and the organ peals out a glad welcome to one and all. Among the stream of worshipers who pass up the narrow aisle glides Persis Baldwin's black-robed figure. The experiences of the past twelve months have left their mark in the pallor of her cheeks and the dark shadows beneath her eyes. Calm and sweet are those same blue eyes, however, when, a little later, they meet the eager glance of Wallace Newton's dark orbs, where from an opposite pew he is intently watching her. A faint pink steals into the white cheeks, and for an instant her lids droop, then once more the steady light burns in the eyes that are lifted to the minister's face during the remainder of the sermon.

In the little burying-ground beside the church, Wallace Newton stands impatiently waiting, and as Persis walks down the path he holds out a detaining hand.

"Will you not forgive me, and bid me welcome, Persis?" said he, in a low voice.

"Welcome home, Wallace," answered Persis, holding out her hand, though her lips trembled as she spoke.

"I could not stay away longer," continued he, earnestly, as together they paced the narrow walks between the leaning headstones; "for though I have been wonderfully prosperous, my life is incomplete without the woman I love. Will you not forget my angry words, Persis, and let me make a home in the West for you and your mother?"

Persis looked at him questioningly.

"Have you not heard?" she said, slowly.

"Heard what, Persis?"

"That my poor mother is dead?" answered she, sadly.

With a start of surprise that Persis' true eyes saw was not real, Wallace answered quickly,—

"Poor Persis! how sorry I am for you. But, surely, now that you are so utterly alone, you will not refuse to come to me."

For a moment the girl did not speak, and her eyes looked

thoughtfully over the sunlit fields to the sky beyond till they seemed to reflect its blue radiance. Then turning to the man before her, she said, quietly,—

“It is too late, Wallace. I cannot go with you.”

“Persis, Persis, is your love for me all gone?” he cried, eagerly.

“Yes, Wallace, that, too, is dead.”

“Then, indeed, I am too late,” said he, bitterly; and, lifting his hat, he walked swiftly away. As Persis listened to his receding footsteps, the last piece of her crumbling idol fell to earth and was no more.

With a swift impulse, Wallace turned and looked back toward the place where he had left Persis standing, but she was gone. Down the street two figures were walking slowly—Alvin Douglas and Persis Baldwin. As Wallace glanced at the faces a light flashed across his vision, and as if by a sudden prophecy he knew that the sweet hope that had sprung up in the minister’s heart would meet its fulfilment.

RECONCILIATION.

A Sonnet.

O eyes that oft with tender love didst glow,
Whose golden depths were filled with sunny gleams,
That warmed my heart by day, and blessed my dreams,
Why art thou now so full of grief and woe,
And gaze at me in sad reproach, as though
I’d hurt thee sore, and thus had quenched the beams
Of light that brightened all my life? Seems
Thou didst me mistake; I meant not go,
But come. So smile, dear eyes, and let not grief
Throw shadows that shall dim the love so true;
For in this world, where joy at best is brief,
We cannot well afford for folly rue,
Or waste the few short hours of earthly bliss
In tears; so come, then, dear, be friends and kiss.

THE PINEVILLE WOMAN'S CLUB.

There was great excitement in the little town of Pineville. Not since the time when the minister preached his sermon from Shakespeare instead of the Bible, had there been such an agitation among its sleepy inhabitants. Groups of men stood about on street corners talking earnestly. Others lounged upon the steps of the country store gazing eagerly at every passer. Now and then, as a woman hurried by, one would exclaim,

"There goes one on 'em now!" and the other would reply,

"Sho! you don't say!" while they both stared at the woman as if she were a visitant from another world. Inside the store the same unusual stir prevailed. Jake Wetherell, the storekeeper, leaned over the counter, listening eagerly to all that was said.

"What did ye say ye wanted, Si?" he asked as a little old man shuffled up to the counter, hitching up his trousers as he went.

"Safety-pins, Jake. Give me a whole gross on 'em," answered the man.

Jake Wetherell grinned appreciatively.

"So Alvira's jined too, has she, Si?"

"Course," answered Si Holbrook, thrusting one of the pins through a hanging supender, and drawing a long breath as it snapped into place. "An' I don't expect to get a button sewed on for the next ten years."

"Who started the thing, anyhow, Si?" asked Jake.

"Well, es near es I can make out the whole thing sprung out-en Sam Peters not let'in' Lucinda have a hired girl last summer."

"La, sakes! what's that got to do with this 'ere woman's club, Si?" said Jake, staring hard at the other.

“Why, you see ’t was sort o’ this way,” answered Si, settling himself comfortably on a sugar barrel, while he rested one foot on a firkin of butter. “’Long about hayin’ time, Lucinda got kinder tuckered out, an’ told Sam he’d have to hire a girl, for she jest couldn’t do the work any longer. Now Sam ’s a putty good sort of a feller, only a leetle close-fisted ’bout money matters, an’ he fired up an’ says he wouldn’t allow any sich extravagance in his family; that women folks made altogether too much fuss over doin’ a few chores about the house, that any man could do while they were a-jawin’ about ’em. Now this did seem sort o’ hard talkin,’ I’ll allow, ’cause Lucinda ’d been a gettin’ up all summer at four o’clock in the mornin’ an’ cookin’ the meals for Sam an’ five hired men, ‘sides lookin’ after his old mother that’s all crippled up with rheumatis’, an’ Lucinda up an’ struck, as one might say, then an’ there. She jest told Sam that es long es he didn’t mind doin’ a few chores about the house, she guessed she’d take a leetle vacation. She’d been a-wantin’ to go down to Bosting to visit her cousin Miranda Walker for the last five years, an’ she guessed this would be es good a time es any. Now Lucinda had a leetle nest egg she’d been a-savin’ to buy a new set o’ parlor furniture, an’ she told Sam that she guessed ef she didn’t have some sort o’ change soon, she’d be where she’d have no use for a parlor set anyhow, an’ she’d take that money an’ go to Bosting. An’ I snum, she did the very next day. Sam, he fussed around a few days an’ then got Drusilla Jacobs to come an’ keep house for him, an’ she’s been there ever since.”

“Ye don’t mean to say that Lucinda haint got back, do ye?” asked Jake in surprise.

“Oh, la! no. She stayed down to Bosting about two months, but when she came back ye never seen sich a changed critter. She was es plump an’ rosy, an’ looked es peart an’ trim es a young gal. She had on a gown that looked es if it had jest growed there, it was so slick. She told Alvira it was built by a tailor in Bosting, an’ was awfully swell. Her hair was histed up over a cushion off’n her forehead an’ made her look

'bout two inches taller 'n she was. She said that pompadoos was all the style in Bosting, an' gave on sich an intellectual air. She's all the time a-talkin' 'bout woman's rights, woman's clubs, bicycle ridin', progressive whist, an' a lot more lingo that there don't seem to be no sense in no how. She's kept Drusilla Jacobs to do the housework, 'cause she says she's got through bein' a man's dredge, an' is a-goin' to cultivate her brain the rest of her life an' improve her talents. She subscribed for four magazines, two weekly papers, an' has brought home a whole trunk full of novels. Sam acts sort o' dazed like, an' he told me privately, that somehow he didn't feel acquainted with Lucinda, she was so changed.'

"But what about this new fangled club that's stirred everybody up so?" said Jake impatiently.

"Don't hurry me, Jake, I'm a-gettin' there es fast es I can," answered Si, lifting his other foot on to the butter-firkin, and tasting a lump of sugar from the next barrel.

"Lucinda hadn't been home more 'n a week or so when she went to see every woman for miles around, an' ef she haint stirred up a hornet's nest, I'll gin up. She said she was a-organizing a woman's club, an' every self-respectin' woman must jine. It didn't take more 'n a minute to get 'em all started, for women air jest like cattle, ye let one on 'em take a header in one direction an' they 'll all rush pell-mell atter her. I tell ye what, Jake, there's a-goin' to be a revolution in every house in town, or my name's not Si Holbrook." Si paused a moment to eat another lump of sugar and then went on with his story.

"Jo Commings's wife Betsy has sold her churn to buy a dictionary, an' they air sending all their milk to the creamery instead o' makin' butter on 't, an' Bill Thompson 's sold his south acre lot an' gin the money to Tryphena to buy a lot o' books on English literature."

"How ye do talk, Si, I never 'd a thought that o' Bill Thompson," said Jake almost breathless with astonishment.

“Well, Tryphena allus did have Bill sort o’ under her thumb, I’ll allow, an’ Bill ’ud do ’most anythin’ to please her,” answered Si, his mouth full of sugar.

“But what do they do at this ere woman’s club, Si, anyhow?”

“Do, oh! they read papers they’ve writ on all sorts o’ things consarnin’ women, such es the higher edercation o’ woman an’ sich like.”

“Alvira Snow’s a-writin’ a paper on ‘The Evolution o’ Thought,’ I tell ye what, Jake, it ’s wonderful how quick a woman ’ll ketch on to all this new-fangled lingo. Alvira’s paper’s ’mazin’ peart, an’ chuck full o’ big words. She borrowed Betsy Commings’s new dictionary ’cause there wa’n’t enough in our old one to express her idee. These air pushin’ times in our town, Jake, pushin’ times, an’ I guess I’d better be a-gettin’ along home afore all the fires go out, ’cause, la! Alvira wouldn’t know it ef things were all friz up, she’s so excited over her evolution paper. Say, Jake, I guess ye might es well do me up a few crackers, a couple o’ pounds o’ cheese, an’ a pound o’ codfish, that ’ll sort o’ keep us along till Alvira’s paper ’s writ.”

The old man clambered down from the sugar barrel, and with his hands filled with his purchases he left the store, while Jake Wetherell gazed after him, muttering under his breath,

“Well, I snum! ef it don’t beat all.”

The little village of Pineville, nestling among the hills and mountains of one of our Northern states, was so isolated from the outside world that the wheel of progress had whirled by, leaving not one trace of its passing. A dozen or more houses clustered together formed its center, though most of its people lived upon farms a few miles out. One little church was its only spiritual center, while one country store supplied all the material wants of its inhabitants. In a diminutive corner of this store was the post-office, though so few letters ever found their way to its pigeon holes, it had but small significance to anyone.

No railway connecting the little village with the outside

world, the summer boarder had not discovered its beauties, or brought to its people even a glimpse of life as it really was. Thus it was that the customs of its inhabitants remained as they had been for more than half a century, and it would seem that nothing short of an earthquake would ever arouse them from their lethargy. However, when Lucinda Peters returned from her trip to Boston, and started a woman's club in their midst, it certainly had the effect of a small earthquake upon the sleepy little village. Every man, woman and child felt the changed atmosphere, and the excitement increased as the days went by. Jake Wetherell's store being the headquarters for the male gossips of the place, groups of them lounged about discussing the matter, at all hours of the day. Nearly every man felt the disquieting influence in his own household, and resented it bitterly. What right had the wife of his bosom, she who had ever looked upon him as her lord and master, to join a woman's club without his consent? What right had she to neglect even the smallest task, that she might scribble her silly thoughts on paper, or pore over books whose titles, even, had so little meaning for him? It was a breaking away from the old customs of his father, and his forefather. The old ways were good enough for him, why not for her?

"I tell you what, Jake, this ere thing has got to be put a stop to!" said Jo Commings fiercely, and emphasizing his words with a blow of his huge fist on the counter that made all the tin boxes rattle.

"Lucinda Peters had ought to be arrested for a-stirin' up the community in this ere fashion. I haint had a good square meal since the thing begun, nor a button sewed on either.

"Jake 's got a sluice o' safety-pins, Jo, that I reckon he'd like to sell ye. I'm a-usin' of 'em all the time now, 'stead o' buttons, an' like 'em first-rate," drawled Si Holbrook good-naturedly.

"Safety-pins!" sniffed Jo, contemptuously. "I haint got es fur es usin' of 'em yet, an' I don't intend to, either. Now

come on, boys, an' we'll settle this business right now. The women air havin' a meetin' over 'n the schoolhouse this afternoo, an' I'm goin' to it, ef I aint invited."

A half dozen men sprang up and followed Jo, as he started for the door, Si Holbrook shuffling along after them.

"Now, boys, I aint approvin' o' this ere disturbin' o' women folks. Jest let 'em alone, an' it 'll work itself out in a little while, gin 'em rope enough," expostulated Si, as he hurried along, but no one paid any attention.

It was a clear, cold afternoon in early spring, and the little red schoolhouse was all aglow with sunshine and warm with a roaring fire in the air-tight stove. Twenty women were seated about the room, the slim ones crowded into the small benches, while the more corpulent were seated comfortably on the tops of the old-fashioned desks. Lucinda Peters occupied the teacher's chair upon the little raised platform. The meeting was in full swing and Alvira Holbrook was in the middle of her paper on "The Evolution of Thought," when a loud knock was heard on the door. Alvira paused in her reading, but Lucinda shook her head, and she continued to the end. Rap, rap, rap, went the knocks upon the door, and then with a rude push it was thrown violently open. Some of the women screamed, others sprang to their feet, or crouched tremblingly in their seats as the men trooped in, led by Jo Commings. Lucinda Peters rose in her seat and faced the intruders.

"To what am I indebted for this intrusion, gentlemen?" said she with quiet dignity. Jo Commings walked up and rapped on the desk with his whip-handle.

"Now, look a-here, Mis' Peters, we men have come here to-day to put a stop to this ere club o' yourn. We air satisfied with our wives jest es they be now, 'thout all this ere book-larnin' ye air a tellin' 'em to get on to. We don't want any newfangled notions put into their heads, an' we aint a-goin' to have 'em, either. You've stirred up this community an' made trouble in every house in town an' the thing has jest got to stop here. Betsy Commings, you walk straight out o' this an'

come home with me," added he to his wife, who was perched upon a desk in the further corner of the room. With cheeks that turned first red and then white, the young woman left her seat and walked slowly to where her husband stood. Grasping her roughly by the arm they were about to pass from the room, when Lucinda Peters's voice arrested them.

"Stop! I forbid any person from leaving this room until I have vindicated myself from the accusations of this man, whose manners, I judge, were borrowed from the cattle he breeds, and whose eyes can see no higher than the earth he plows. You say that I have stirred up this community. If such is the case, I rejoice in it, for it is time that we were awakened to the fact that we are human beings, with brains to think, and souls to feel. That there is a higher order of living than the mere eating and drinking, sleeping and working existence we have known so long. That outside this sleepy village, that has been like a prison to many of us, is a great world where music, art, culture abound, and though we are debarred from sharing its joys, we can learn of it, keep in touch with it, through the books we are all privileged to read. Not willingly have I made trouble in any household. I have only striven to better the condition of my own sex, and to awaken them to new ambitions. There are no class of women in all the world who so nearly approach mental starvation as the farmers' wives. Dwelling at a distance from city or town, they have scarcely any reading matter except the Bible, the farmer's almanac, and an occasional newspaper. Working, as many of them do, from four in the morning until ten at night, they are physically worn out, and the mental faculties have no chance whatever. In starting this woman's club, I had hoped to arouse not only the women, but the men through the women, to an interest in mental culture, that they might not pass through this life knowing nothing of the beauties of the great world around us, or be deprived of the intellectual joys we are all entitled to. If there are any of my friends and neighbors who will stand by me in this undertaking, the Pineville Woman's Club may yet be a success." As Lucinda ceased speaking, six women

arose, and with a smile, Lucinda continued, "Gentlemen, you have failed in your object. The meeting is now adjourned until another week."

Slowly and silently the men filed back to Jake Wetherell's store, astonishment seemingly depriving them of their powers of speech, Si Holbrook chuckled softly as he seated himself on the sugar barrel and tasted a lump from the one beside him.

"Jake," said he, after a little, "I feel jest es ef I'd been to meetin'. Lucinda Peters gin us a sermon that beat the minister al to nothin,' an' I'm thinkin' 't won't be all thrown away, neither. La, Jake, when ye come to think on 't what a lot o' time we menfolks has 'tween hay 'n' grass to loaf round this ere store. Yet the womenfolks' work don't ever seem to be done. From mornin' till night, day in an' day out, three hundred an' sixty-five days in a year, they air peggin' away a-doin' of the same sort o' work. Now I don't believe 't would hurt any on us menfolks to ease 'em up a bit, an' gin 'em more time to read an' think out their putty thoughts. I snum, Jake, sense Alvira writ that ere paper on evolution, it's gin me a heap o' things to think on. I seem to feel same es Sam Peters does 'bout Lucinda, thet I aint much acquainted with Alvira even if we have lived together goin' on forty year. Now, I'm fur havin' this ere woman's club stay put, an' I 'm a-willin' to help it all I can. La! I don't mind a-doin' a few extra chores round the house, nor eatin' of—there! that makes me think, I guess, Jake, ye might do me up a few more crackers, a couple o' pounds o' cheese, an' a pound o' codfish, they'll come 'n sort o' handy when Alvira starts in to write her next paper."

Glorious sunshine, Heaven's boon,
Putting forth thy strength at noon,
Showing us in one short hour,
All thy great and wondrous power.

WHAT HAPPENED TO HANNAH.

“ ’Taint a mite likely that anything will ever happen ‘round these parts; nothin’ ever has, an’ nothin’ ever will,” muttered Hannah Peabody, as she stood in the open doorway and glanced discontentedly up and down the long country road. “Dear me, I suppose I’m dreadful wicked to feel so kinder restless an’ oneasy, when the Lord has given me health an’ a moderate amount o’ comforts, an’ work enough to keep me busy most o’ the time. But somehow there is such a dreadful sameness to it all; one day’s as much like another as two peas in a pod. I’ve done the same things year in an’ year out, accordin’ as the seasons come around, for the last twenty years, an’ there aint a single thing of any importance happened since sister Sarah got married an’ went West to live. I suppose I’m lonesome ‘thout Sarah, an’ that’s one thing that makes me feel so.” Hannah sighed as she sank down upon the doorstep and with her elbows upon her knees, and her chin resting between her palms, she went on with her musing. “Folks are allus a-sayin’ they shouldn’t ‘a’ thought I’d ‘a’ let Sarah get married, seein’ we was all there was left, an’ had property enough to live on. Just as though I could ‘a’ stopped it! La! Sarah was clean daft over Eben Whitney an’ everyone knows that marriage is the only cure for that trouble. Well, Eben ’s been a good husband to her, as husbands go, though for my part I’m goin’ on forty, an’ I’ve managed middlin’ well ‘thout one so far.” A little smile dimpled the corners of Hannah’s mouth as she spoke. “Goodness knows ‘taint no man ‘t I’m a-pinin’ for!” she burst out, springing up and “shooing” a hen energetically from off the broad stone step. “Though I’m that anxious for somethin’ to happen, I wouldn’t much care whether there was a man mixed up in it or not. Anything for a change.”

Steppin’ out into the road Hannah’s keen eyes looked rest-

lessly from side to side. The afternoon sun was beginning its westward journey, and the trees cast cool shadows across the dusty highway. Far beyond her range of vision the road lay straight and level for several miles. Suddenly a cow trotted slowly across the road and disappeared in an adjacent corn-field.

"If there aint one o' Joe Peters's cows a-trampin' through my corn!" exclaimed she, picking up a stick and hastening after the offending animal. As if glad of something on which to expend her surplus energy, Hannah walked swiftly down the road until the sight of a strange object standing directly in her path drove all thoughts of the cow from her mind. With its glossy coat of varnish, its gleaming silver lamps, its high-backed seat with crimson cushions, stood one of the latest inventions of modern travel, an automobile. Now, though perhaps Hannah may have read of this new kind of vehicle, the actual sight of one standing, solitary and alone in that quiet country road was surely an astonishing vision. Its owner was nowhere in sight, though Hannah's swift glance scanned the bushes and shrubbery along the roadside. Curiosity overcoming her surprise, Hannah stepped up to the strange carriage and examined it closely.

"I snum! if this aint about the cutest thing I ever did see!" muttered she, placing her hand upon the crimson seat that yielded gently to her touch. "My, aint these cushions soft! I'd jest like to try 'em to see how they set."

Hannah gave a swift glance backward, but no one was in sight, and with a sudden impulse she stepped carefully into the carriage. Seating herself comfortably upon the yielding cushions, she leaned back with a luxurious sigh.

"Seems kind a spooky 'thout any horse hitched to it," said she aloud. "Makes me think o' when I was a little girl an' played go to ride in grand-pa's old carryall. Well, I suppose I'd better get out afore any one comes an' catches me."

With the conscious thrill of a stolen pleasure, Hannah was about to descend, when she accidentally placed her hand upon

the shining lever. Silently the wheels began to turn and to her horror and dismay she found herself gliding swiftly along the smooth road.

"Whoa!" she cried, forgetting in her excitement the invisible power that governed this wonderful carriage. "Whoa! I say. Oh, dear! why don't the pesky thing stop? Whoa! whoa! whoa!"

The last word ended in a shriek that seemed to be echoed by another voice as a man's figure came running out of the woods, shouting and waving his arms wildly.

"Stop! stop!" he cried.

"I can't! I can't!" screamed Hannah, leaning wildly forward with outstretched arms as if holding the reins of an infuriated animal.

"Turn the lever!" shouted the man, but Hannah and the horseless carriage had vanished in the distance. On, on they sped, past farmhouses and fields of ripening corn, through shady bits of wood, and beside long fields of turning hay. A cow stood chewing her cud in the shady road before them, and Hannah closed her eyes with a shudder at the thought of the collision. But the cow ran as never a cow ran before, and on they went. Faster and faster they seemed to fly till the whole landscape whirled before Hannah's terrified vision. A man with a load of hay turned swiftly to one side as he spied the strange vehicle speeding toward him, and as it passed his eyes stood out in astonishment.

"Hannah Peabody, by thunder!" he cried, turning to look after the flying carriage.

As she was borne onward Hannah's feelings were a strange mixture of mingled fright and pleasure. The thought that some evil spirit had heard her wish that something might happen, and had taken possession of her bodily, was firmly rooted in her mind, and mingled with her terror was an unholy pleasure in the situation. Come what would, this swiftly gliding motion, this flying through the air with the breezes fanning her brow and tingling her cheeks, was a delightful sensation, a hitherto unknown pleasure never dreamed of by Hannah

Peabody. But suddenly the thought of the railless bridge in the turn of the road not far before them, made the woman's heart stand still with dread. Desperately she grasped the lever before her as if to steady herself, and unconsciously she turned it in the right direction. Slowly and gently the carriage paused in its wild career, and stood still.

As much astonished at this abrupt ending of her ride as she was at its beginning, Hannah slowly and tremblingly climbed down to the ground.

"For the land sakes, Hannah Peabody, where did you come from?" called out a woman's voice. "Aint you got lost?"

Glancing up, Hannah saw one of the neighboring farmers' wives driving toward her in an open buggy. Not for the world would she have that gossiping Susan Comings know of her adventure. Moving swiftly toward a house on the opposite side of the road, she answered, coolly:

"Not that I know of, Mis' Comings. I'm a-goin' to make a call."

The woman drew in her horse and gazed curiously at Hannah's bare head.

"Aint you afraid of a stroke 'thout your hat on, Hannah?" asked she.

For the first time Hannah realized her bonnetless condition, yet her ready wits did not forsake her.

"'Taint the fashion to wear hats this summer," said she, with a laugh, "an' you might as well be out o' the world as out o' the fashion."

"Sho! I didn't suppose you cared as much as all that for the fashion, Hannah." Suddenly her eyes rested on the carriage standing so quietly by the roadside. "Dear me, if there aint Dr. John Wheeler's horseless carriage. Must be some one's sick in that house, Hannah. Who lives there anyway?" But Hannah evidently did not hear, for with her hand upon the brass knocker, she stood silently waiting admittance.

"Seem 's if Hannah Peabody got more high an' mighty every year," muttered Susan Comings, as she drove slowly homeward.

As the sound of Hannah's knock died away, a man's voice called out:

"Come in."

Hannah pushed open the door and stepped inside. The long, low room, opening out of the entry, seemed deserted, and a feeling of regret at her imprudence in walking into this strange house made her pause before advancing further. A slight groan startled her, while a man's voice again spoke.

"If that's the doctor, please come right in, for my leg's feelin' mighty bad, an' I'm powerful 'fraid it 's broke."

Hannah's womanly sympathy was aroused by these words, and she hesitated no longer.

"I aint no doctor, an' I only called as I was passin' to ask for a drink o' water. But if I can do anything to help you I'll be only too glad, seein' as you've got hurt."

As she spoke Hannah walked into the room and toward a low couch upon which lay a man's tall figure. At the sound of her voice he turned and looked earnestly up into her face.

"Hannah Peabody!" exclaimed he, holding out his hand with a smile.

"Joe Thompson!" The name slipped softly from Hannah's lips, as with her hand clasped in his the man and woman gazed into each other's eyes. A slight flush crept into Hannah's face and she slowly drew her fingers from his hold.

"So you've come home again, Joe, after twenty years," said she, quietly.

"Yes, Hannah, an' the first thing I've done is to fall from the hay mow and break my leg," answered Joe with a laugh that ended in a groan.

Silently Hannah bent, and gently drawing off the shoe and stocking, she began bathing the swollen foot and ankle. A half hour later the doctor pushed open the door and walked in. He looked hot, tired and dusty.

"I've had a nice time getting here, Joe!" exclaimed he, throwing aside his coat and hat and wiping the perspiration from his flushed face. "A woman ran off with my carriage and I've had to foot it for the last three miles. I stopped to

get a drink of water from the spring in the wood just below the Peabody place, and when I came out I saw the carriage and a woman disappearing down the road like a streak. I expected every minute there would be a smashup, and I've ran most of the way. But there stands my automobile in front of your house as sound as a nut. Now I'd like to know what became of that woman?"

"Well, here she is, doctor," said Hannah, walking in from the kitchen where she had gone for a pail of fresh water.

"What, you Miss Peabody!" cried the doctor in surprise. "How did you happen to run off with my carriage?"

"I didn't, it ran off with me," answered Hannah, laughing. "The cushions looked so kind o' soft an' invitin' I thought I'd just try 'em a minute to see how they set, an' the thing started afore I could get out. I hope I didn't hurt nothin', doctor."

Dr. Wheeler stared a moment at the woman's cool tone.

"But how did you happen to stop without an accident?" asked he.

"How do you usually stop the thing?" replied Hannah, Yankee fashion.

"By turning the lever," answered the doctor.

"Well, I reckon that 's just what I did," said Hannah. The doctor laughed.

"It was lucky you stopped where you did or you might have gone off the bridge a little further on," said he.

"Yes, I thought of that," answered Hannah quietly.

Dr. Wheeler's eyes twinkled merrily as he turned away and proceeded to apply his professional skill to Joe's fractured limb.

"Now, Miss Hannah," said he when Joe had been made as comfortable as possible. "If you'll stay and look after my patient, I think he'll be as good as new in a month or six weeks."

"A month or six weeks!" repeated Hannah, slowly.

"Please stay, Hannah," spoke up Joe, pleadingly. Hannah glanced swiftly from one to the other before she answered.

“Well, it don’t seem exactly Christian-like to leave a man helpless an’ alone. So as long as I’m here I suppose I’d better stay.”

“That’s right, Miss Hannah, I thought you’d feel so about it. I quite agree with you,” and with a smiling good-night, the doctor stepped into his horseless carriage and whirled out of sight.

When they were left alone, Joe’s voice first broke the silence.

“I’ve been wonderin’, Hannah, if you’d ever changed your mind ’bout that question I asked you twenty years ago? I aint never found another woman that I could like half so well as I did you, an’ so I’ve sort o’ let ’em all alone. But somehow I couldn’t make up my mind to live an’ die out West, an’ so after I’d made my pile thought I’d come East again, an’ if you was still Hannah Peabody I’d put the question to you once more. I’ve bought this place, an’ though it aint any better ’n the one you’ve got, it would be sort of a change. You couldn’t make up your mind to stay for good, could you, Hannah?”

For a moment Hannah did not speak, then with a smile that broadened with her words, she answered:

“Well, Joe, I don’t know but I could, for as you say, ’t would be sort of a change, anyhow.”

ON THE ROCKS.

O’er the distant tree-tops glowing,
Gleams the setting sun’s last rays;
In the sky its bright beams throwing,
Making clouds seem all ablaze.
On the rocks we stood there, gazing
O’er the landscapes far and near,
While our lips were ever praising
Nature’s beauties, all so dear.

HOW TRYPHOSIA MANAGED.

It was over. The last funeral guest had driven slowly away, and Tryphosia Bennet was left alone in the old farmhouse. The crimson light of the western sky shone full in the girl's face, as she stood in the open doorway, yet the pallor of her cheeks grew deeper by contrast.

Suddenly the sun sank behind the hill-tops, and a dusky twilight settled over the landscape. With an effort Tryphosia turned and faced the emptiness within. The old-fashioned sitting-room looked eerie in the dim light. A long shudder swept over the lonely girl; then sinking down upon the doorstep, she covered her face with her hands and sobbed bitterly.

"Tryphosia!" called out a cheerful voice from the roadside. "You ain't afraid, be ye?"

Tryphosia started up and ran quickly toward the approaching figure.

"For the land sakes! ef you ain't jest about es nervous as a witch," cried the woman, as she folded the trembling girl in her motherly arms. "I told Jotham I guessed likely es not ye would be, an' soon's I'd done the dishes an' set the bread to risin' I came right along. Soon's he gets through milkin', Jotham's comin' too, an' we're a goan' to stay all night an' talk things over."

"Oh! Mrs. Thompson, how good your are!" said Tryphosia, still clinging to the woman's arm as they walked towards the house.

"La! what are neighbors good for, I'd like to know, ef ye can't call on 'em in time o' trouble?"

Soon firelight and lamplight had chased away the shadows, and the old farmhouse looked once more the abode of cheerful comfort.

The death of her mother had left Tryphosia Bennet utterly

alone in the world. A few stony acres, the weather-beaten farmhouse, an antiquated horse and cow, were the girl's inheritance. For more than a generation the farm had belonged to the Bennet family, and in the long ago thrift and economy had made the place a fine one. Time, with its vicissitudes, however, had done its usual work; acre after acre had been turned into money, till but the worthless ones remained, while sun and storm had blackened the clapboards and loosened the shingles of the buildings.

"I don't suppose you know yet jest what ye will do, Tryphosia?" said Jotham Thompson, as he seated himself comfortably before the fire.

Tryphosia shook her head silently.

"Ef ye're thinkin' o' sellin' out, perhaps we could strike a bargain, seein' your land jines on to mine," continued he; "'taint worth much, an' I can't pay much, but sometimes a little money does more good than a lot o' land that ain't a-bringin' in nothin'."

"You are very good, Mr. Thompson, but I don't wish to sell," answered Tryphosia, quietly.

"Sho! now, ye ain't a goin' to live here all alone, be ye?"

"I've sent for my Cousin Hannah and her husband to come and live with me for the present," said Tryphosia.

"What, she that married Joseph Pike, over to Ridgely? La! Jo Pike ain't worth his salt to work, Tryphosia, an' Hannah was sort o' peeked lookin'. Got bronchitis, or somethin', ain't she?"

"Cousin Hannah has a bronchial trouble, I believe, and I thought the change might be of benefit to her," answered Tryphosia, simply.

"'Tain't that I want to meddle in your business, Tryphosia, you know that; but accordin' to my idee, you're makin' a great mistake in askin' Jo and Hannah Pike to live with you. Jo allus worked in a shop, an' ain't used to farmwork nor milkin', anyhow. I swum, I don't believe he can tell a potato from a punkin when it's a growin'," said Jotham, contemptuously.

"There, Jotham; now don't you go to gettin' wrathful over what Jo Pike knows or don't know. It's likely that Tryphosia knows who she wants to live with her, anyhow," spoke up Mrs. Thompson, with comfortable good-nature.

"I know you mean well, Mr. Thompson," said Tryphosia; "but mother told me to ask Cousin Hannah to come here until I had decided what was best for to do, so of course I did so."

"Well, es I said before, 'tain't none of my business, anyhow, an' perhaps Jo's wits air sharper'n they used to be. But what I was thinkin' on mostly was the mortgage that Dr. Brown holds on the farm, an' how ye was a goin' to keep up the interest on it. Your mother told ye 'bout it, didn't she?"

"Yes, she told me. But when I spoke to Dr. Brown about it, he was very kind and I said I need not worry; that he should never trouble me with it. Of course, I knew he meant until I had made my plans for the future and could attend to it," said Tryphosia, with dignity.

Jotham Thompson's lips drew together in a low whistle, while he muttered under his breath, "An' Dr. Brown's such a close-fisted man, too." Suddenly a broad grin overspread his face.

"Well, now, that's 'mazin clever on him, sure," said he with a sly look at the girl's innocent face. "He must be mighty fond o' ye to have said that. Who knows but you and he may ——" He finished his sentence with a sound between a cough and a groan, as his wife's foot pressed with no gentle force against his pet corn.

"Dr. Brown's a mighty nice man, Tryphosia," said Mrs. Thompson. "An' don't you go to frettin' about that mortgage."

It was a pale, anxious face that stared with wide-open eyes from beneath the patchwork coverlid of the great four-poster, far into the night. The problems of life seemed beyond Tryphosia's solving, as she strove to pierce the dark veil that hid the future from her gaze. Ah! how many times had she rebelled at this quiet, peaceful life, and longed for the noise and turmoil of the great city? Yet now, with the danger of its

being torn from her grasp, how dear every stick and stone upon the old place had become. It was here that the dear mother had lived and loved her, and here all the memories of her happy childhood were clustered. No! she would never part with the dear old homestead—Never!

“How on arth Tryphosia expects to manage things on this ‘ere place, the land only knows. It’s my opinion, though, Dr. Brown’s got his eye on the girl as well as the place. An’ she couldn’t do better’n take up with him. I’ve sort o’ expected he’d be lookin’ up a thirdly afore a great while,” said Jotham, as he settled himself in Tryphosia’s best feather bed.

“There, Jotham Thompson,” cried his wife, indignantly, “don’t you go to puttin’ notions into Tryphosia’s head. The very idea o’ that poor lamb marryin’ that wolf in sheep’s clothin’, who’s old enough to be her grandfather, makes the cold chills creep up an’ down my backbone. Ye ought to be ashamed to even think on ‘t.”

A loud snore was Jotham’s answer, and his worthy spouse soon followed his example.

How it happened that Dr. Ephraim Brown held a mortgage that nearly covered the value of the old Bennet place, was a matter known only to himself, and it was a source of secret satisfaction to him daily. A wolf in sheep’s clothing, Mrs. Thompson had called him, which was not a misnomer, yet in his own opinion he was the benefactor of nearly every family in town. Twice married, he was for the second time a widower, and childless; a sharp, shrewd, hard-natured man of sixty, who, while never refusing attendance upon the poor, he exacted from every property holder the equivalent of the money due, till he had grown rich in houses and lands. For years he had looked with covetous eyes, not only upon the Bennet homestead, but upon Tryphosia as well, whom he had watched grow from babyhood into a beautiful childhood, and into a more beautiful womanhood. Now that she was homeless and alone,

why should he not obey the impulse of his heart and win the girl for his wife, if he chose to do so, and thus rescue her from her lonely position?

The sunshine of a lovely day shone through the windows of the garret in the Bennet farmhouse. Kneeling on the floor, beside a great oaken chest, was Tryphosia, intently examining its contents. A strong odor of camphor mingled with lavender arose from the folded garments. The chest was massive, and rich with carving, and on the inside of the lid was written the names of "Jonathan and Priscilla Holden," Tryphosia's great, great grandparents, who in the long ago had left the old world for the untried shores of the new, because true love was not allowed to have its way. Many thoughts came to Tryphosia as she examined the contents of the chest, and the silent tears rolled down her cheeks as she thought of the future, which looked so dark.

"Tryphosia!" called a voice, and Hannah Pike's thin face was thrust into the room.

"Great tribulation! ef you ain't a sittin' here on the floor a weepin' salt tears, an' Dr. Brown down in the best room a waitin' to see ye!" said she, breathlessly.

"What do you suppose he wants, Hannah?" said Tryphosia, springing up and wiping her eyes hastily.

"Not bein' a clairvoyant, I can't exactly say," answered Hannah, quaintly. "He acts terribly uneasy in his mind, though, an's a trampin' 'round the room like a king o' the forest."

With a strange sinking at her heart, Tryphosia walked into the old-fashioned parlor.

"How do you do, Doctor?" said she, with quiet dignity, as they shook hands. "It was very kind of you to come and see me."

"Not at all, not at all," answered the doctor, drawing his chair close to the shrinking girl. "You must know that I have a great interest in you, Tryphosia, and since your mother was taken away I have been greatly troubled in my mind about your living here all alone."

"But I do not live alone, Doctor. Joe and Hannah Pike are with me," answered Tryphosia quickly.

"Yes, yes; I know. But what are their protection compared with having a husband to care for you, my dear?" said the doctor, with a glance that made the girl recoil as from a blow.

"I do not understand you, Dr. Brown. What do you mean?" said she coldly.

"Well, Tryphosia, I'm a man of few words, and I may as well state my errand at once. I mean, my dear, that I want you to be my wife," said the doctor, as with a sudden movement he drew the girl toward him.

With nervous strength, Tryphosia pushed him from her, her cheeks crimson with anger.

"What you ask, Dr. Brown, is impossible, utterly impossible," she cried, indignantly.

"Why impossible?" asked the doctor, his face hardening.

"I do not care for you in that way. I—I could not," stammered she.

"'Tis better to be an old man's darling than a young man's slave, Tryphosia," quoted the doctor; "but leaving sentiment out of the matter, are you not a little foolish to refuse the protection of any good man, when you are so alone and, as one might say, homeless?"

"I do not think so, Dr. Brown; I have the protection of both my cousin and her husband, and the shelter of my own house," answered Tryphosia, bravely meeting the sneer in the doctor's eyes. "I believe the interest on the mortgage is due the twelfth of next month. If you will call on that day, I will see that the money is ready. Good-morning, Dr. Brown." And with gentle dignity, Tryphosia Bennet walked slowly from the room.

* * * *

"Hannah! oh, Hannah! what ever are we going to do?" cried the poor girl, whose courage seemed to forsake her the moment she was out of the doctor's sight.

"Great tribulation! Tryphosia, how you do scare one, a tearin' 'round! An' what's the doctor gone off for lookin' as

sour es if he'd swallowed one of his own pills?" said Hannah, dropping her spectacles into the dishwater as Tryphosia grasped her arm excitedly.

"It's the mortgage, Hannah, that Dr. Brown holds on the place. What shall I do to earn some money?"

"The graspin' old critter, to come here a pesterin' a poor, motherless girl! The Lord's judgment be on him!" said Hannah, indignantly.

"But, Hannah, I must raise the money some way very soon," answered Tryphosia, earnestly.

"Ef 'twas only fair time, you might sell doughnuts," said Hannah, with sudden inspiration. "Lucinda Curtis earned ten dollars fair week a sellin' em; they were awful fatty, too," and Hannah sniffed contemptuously.

"But I must have twenty-five dollars before the twelfth of next month," continued Tryphosia, desperately.

"Why don't you try an' sell some o' that old truck that's a clutterin' up the garret since the year one?" said Hannah, after a little. "'Tain't likely anyone 'round these parts would want it, but city folks are 'mazin' fond o' antique furniture, an' goodness knows there's some things there that must 'a' come over in the ark. Seems to me I saw somethin' in one o' those Boston papers, sayin' there was quite a demand for sich like!" continued she, picking up a paper and scanning its columns eagerly. "Why, here's the very thing, Tryphosia!" and she read the following notice:

"'WANTED!—Antique furniture of every description. Good prices paid for the genuine article. Address: BLANK & CO., Washington Street.'"

"I do believe, Hannah, we've hit on the right thing at last!" cried Tryphosia, her face brightening, "for I have some very valuable old pieces that were grandma's, and though it will be hard to part with them, I would better sacrifice them than to lose my home."

"Sakes alive, yes, child! An! there'll be more room for catnip an' spearmint, too," answered Hannah. "An' ef I was you, I'd jest go an' see them folks myself."

"I believe I will, Hannah," answered Tryphosia, thoughtfully.

It was nearly two weeks later that there appeared in the papers the following notice:

"On the afternoon of Saturday, Nov. 12th., there will be an exhibition and sale of antique furniture at the Bennet farmhouse, in the Town of A——, County of B——."

This announcement aroused much curiosity on the part of the country folk far and near, but the persons especially concerned kept their own counsel.

When the day of the sale arrived the blazing logs in the great fireplace mingled their light with the sunshine, which lay in golden patches on the floor of the long, low room. Before one of the diamond-paned windows Tryphosia had placed her great grandmother's spinning wheel, and standing before it was what appeared to be the ghost of that venerable person—a slight, girlish figure dressed in black satin, with a quilted petticoat, over which was a bunched-up gown of flowered silk. A dainty white kerchief was folded across her bosom, leaving the slender throat bare. The coil of golden hair was held in place by a high shell comb, and quaint little high-heeled shoes, with silver buckles, finished this charming costume.

"Great tribulation! Tryphosia, ef you don't look jest like your own grandmother!" cried Hannah, approvingly, as her eyes fell admiringly upon the apparition.

"Mrs. Priscilla Holden, at your service!" said Tryphosia gaily, adding, "I wonder if I could manage this wheel?"

"La, yes! it's easy enough if you only know how," answered Hannah, placing her foot on the treadle and starting the wheel in motion.

"I beg your pardon!" exclaimed the voice of a man. "I trust I am not intruding, but I understand that there is to be a sale of antiques here to-day."

"Great tribulation! how did you get in?" cried Hannah, whirling about and facing the intruder, a fine-looking young fellow, with the air of a city-bred man about him.

"I knocked twice, and as there was no response I ventured to walk in," said he, smiling. Then handing a card to Tryphosia, he added, "My name is Jerome Holden, and I represent the firm of Blank & Co., of Boston."

"I am very glad to meet you, Mr. Holden," said Tryphosia, glancing quickly from the card to the young man's comely face, "and I hope you will be pleased with our exhibit."

"I think it is the most wonderful room I was ever in. It is simply charming!" answered the young man, enthusiastically, glancing about him. Then, as his eyes rested upon the girlish figure, he added, with a smile: "Your quaint costume makes the picture complete."

"It belonged to my great, great grandmother, and to gratify a whim I am wearing it to-day," answered Tryphosia, blushing at the young man's evident admiration. "I have a very handsome costume which once belonged to great, great grandfather, also; though of course I would not part with either of them, not for the world," she added fervently.

A merry look crept into the young man's eyes, but her innocent face held him silent.

In a short time the room began to fill, many of the people being old friends and neighbors, who, with a few strangers, were anxious to secure curiosities of ancient days. Tryphosia moved about with smiles and greetings for all, while Hannah served tea from ancient blue teacups.

"What's Tryphosia a drivin' at, anyhow?" muttered Jotham Thompson, as he stood in one corner drinking a cup of tea. "She won't get ten dollars for the whole on 't."

"Oh, yes! I will. I've already sold the old clock for seventy-five dollars, the chest of drawers for fifty, and I have just had an offer of ninety dollars for that set of blue china," whispered the girl's voice in his ear, as she paused a moment behind the old man. "And you see I have a number of valuable pieces to dispose of yet."

"Ge whiz! you air in luck, Tryphosia," said he, as the smiling girl moved swiftly away.

"Darned smart critter, that girl, anyhow!" muttered he, admiringly. "Don't blame the doctor for tryin' to get her. Swum ef I do."

As though the mention of his name had called forth his person, the door suddenly opened and Dr. Brown walked into the room. Tryphosia's lips were less smiling, though her eyes met his bravely as she greeted him.

"Good afternoon, Doctor. I was expecting you," said she quietly, as she placed a roll of bills in his hand. "Hannah, give the doctor a cup of tea."

"Having a party, Tryphosia?" said he, with a frown, declining the beverage Hannah offered.

"Not exactly, Doctor. I am having an exhibit of some antiques, some of which I am offering for sale," answered she, simply.

The doctor's face grew purple with rage.

"A sale, eh! We'll see about it!" cried he fiercely; "for not one article leaves this house without my consent."

The doctor's voice reached every corner of the room, and a breathless silence fell upon the astonished people. Jerome Holden moved quickly to where Tryphosia stood. Her face was as pale as death, yet she faced the man bravely.

"How dare you speak to me in this manner, Dr. Brown?" said she, indignantly. "And by what right do you stop my sale?"

"By the best right in the world. The right of the owner," said the doctor, triumphantly, taking a paper from his pocket and holding it so all could see.

"This note covers the entire value of this house and all it contains. The note falls due to-day. As Miss Bennet cannot meet it, I claim the property."

"If Miss Bennet will allow me, I will gladly pay the amount due," said Jerome, quickly stepping forward.

"An' I'll do the same, by thunder! I ain't agoin' to see Tryphosia turned out o' house an' home in this fashion. So you just give me that note, Doctor," cried Jotham Thompson,

thrusting a roll of bills in the doctor's face. Tryphosia motioned them back, though she thanked them both with a grateful glance.

"Dr. Brown, you claim more than you can prove your right to," said she, quietly drawing a folded paper from the little silk bag that hung by her side. "This paper is a certificate which I have obtained from the Register of Deeds at the County Court House, and which places the date of the mortgage one year later."

The color faded slowly from the doctor's face, and his burly figure seemed to shrink in size before the girl's honest gaze. His eyes shifted and fell beneath it, and without a word he turned and left the house.

It was a poor little ghost of her great grandmother that lay huddled in a heap on the old settee in the late twilight. A storm of sobs shook her, and her heart ached with many conflicting emotions. What a poor triumph it had been after all! and oh! how hard it was won. How terrible had been the mortification of it, and before strangers, too.

Suddenly a voice from out the shadows said gently:

"Miss Bennet!" and Tryphosia sprang quickly to her feet.

"I thought you were gone, Mr. Holden," said she with an effort.

"I could not go without speaking with you once more. May I not stay a little longer?"

"Of course; and I will have Hannah bring a light," answered Tryphosia.

"Please do not, Miss Bennet, the firelight is so pleasant." And Tryphosia sank back on the settee, grateful for the dusk that hid her tear-stained cheeks.

"I wanted to ask you what your grandmother's name was, or rather your great grandmother's," said the young man, as he seated himself before the fire. "I have been looking up the genealogy of my own family, and I think I can tell you something that will surprise you."

"Great grandmother's name was Priscilla Holden. Why, Holden is your name, too, isn't it?" cried Tryphosia, a sudden thought coming to her.

"Yes, and Priscilla Holden was my great grandmother's name; and what is more, they were one and the same person," said Jerome, smiling.

"Then we are," began Tryphosia, "we are——"

"Cousins!" finished the young man, triumphantly, "even though some distance removed. And may I not claim the privilege of our relationship and come and see you sometimes?"

The darkness hid the flush that came into the girl's face, and she smiled as she said softly:

"I shall be very glad to see you any time, Cousin Jerome."

In the days that followed, Jerome Holden availed himself often of this privilege, and life took on a new interest for the lonely girl. Long before the note on the mortgage was due, the cousins had become lovers, and Jerome had assumed the responsibility of settling the doctor's claim.

"Because," said he, when Tryphosia demurred, "it was the home of *my* ancestors as well as yours, and it is my right."

* * * *

Another scene, and this story is finished. It is Tryphosia's wedding day. Once more firelight and sunlight mingle together to illumine the quaint old room. Once more there is a gathering there, but this time all are friends, who come with smiles and pleasant greetings. Tryphosia stands in their midst, dressed in that dainty costume of a hundred years ago, and beside her stands Jerome, clad in that other suit so long hidden in the old chest.

As with clasped hands they listen to the words that make them one, the air seems filled with the invisible presence of those of the long ago; and that love which had been faithful through all time descended upon them and dwelt in their hearts.

HOW ALVIRA WENT TO THE CIRCUS.

"The biggest show on 'arth is a comin' to Pineville!" exclaimed Silas Holbrook, walking into the farmhouse kitchen with his hands filled with gaudy show bills.

"Well, suppos'n 'tis," answered Alvira shortly, without looking up from the sock she was darning. "You haint no call to get excited over it es I know of."

"La! Alvira, how you do snap a feller up," said Silas, fumbling for his glasses and scanning eagerly the list of attractions set forth upon the bills. "didn't know but you might like to take a squint at it yourself, seein' ye haint been nowhere this Summer."

Alvira paused with uplifted needle, and glanced sternly at her husband's flushed face.

"Silas Holbrook, air you a deacon o' the church, or air you not?" questioned she.

"That don't make no difference, Alvira, not a mite; every body goes to the circus nowadays, even the minister," answered Silas coolly.

"Well, you an' I 'll stay at home an' set 'em a good example," answered Alvira firmly. "We hav'n't any money to fool away goin' to the circus."

"All right, Alvira, we won't have no quarrel over it, ef you don't want to go, that settles it," answered the peace-loving Silas, throwing down the gay colored bills with a little sigh. "I'm goin' down to the south meadow to turn over the hay," he added, as he walked out into the summer sunshine.

Left alone, Alvira's eyes seemed drawn unconsciously towards the circus bills. For a little time she resisted the temptation, then with an impatient sniff, no doubt at her own weakness, she picked them up and was soon lost to all save the wonderful pictures, and the marvellous feats of circus people.

"Good morning, Alvira! I see you are as fascinated over those wonderful show bills, as the rest of us. Of course you are going to the circus."

Alvira sprang to her feet with a scream.

"Why Lucinda Peters! how you did scare me!" said she, going to the open door where stood a plump little woman in a bicycle costume, leaning against her wheel. "I suppose I was sort o' interested readin' about the big show, but I haint no idea of goin' to it, just the same."

"Well, I wouldn't miss it for the world," said Lucinda. "A party of us ladies are going on our wheels. I wish you rode a wheel."

"So do I, Lucinda. That's jest the one thing I've been a hankerin' after, is to ride a bicycle. But I suppose I'm too old and hefty," answered Alvira, looking longingly at Lucinda's up-to-date wheel.

"Not a bit of it" cried Lucinda with a gay laugh. "It would do you lots of good, Alvira, and I'll tell you what I'll do. I will teach you to ride on my wheel, then after you've learned you can hire a wheel and go to the circus with us."

"Sakes alive, Lucinda, I don't care anything about the circus, but I'd like 'mazin' well to learn to ride a bicycle, only Silas wouldn't like it, I'm afraid", said Alvira, flushed with pleasure at the thought.

"Don't tell him until you can ride and then he'll think it's all right, that's the way with all the men. Now you come down to our place this afternoon, and I'll give you your first lesson," urged Lucinda, as with a laughing nod of her head, she sprang upon her wheel and sped away, followed by Alvira's admiring eyes.

The rest of the forenoon Alvira was a prey to conflicting emotions. This opportunity of learning to ride a bicycle was what she had long yearned for, and after some mental struggle she decided to accept Lucinda's offer. Not that she had the slightest idea of going to the circus, should she conquer the machine during the following three weeks before the coming of the big show. Oh, no! not she! But to be able to skim

over the smooth country roads at her will, was a delightful thought. Her dinner work out of the way, and Silas safe in the south pasture raking hay, Alvira hastened across the fields, a short cut, to the home of her friend, Lucinda Peters.

As the days passed onward, Silas said no more about going to the circus, though his mind was fully made up to take in this "biggest show on 'arth'", in spite of Alvira's verdict.

"'Taint no use o' sayin' anythin' more about it, cause I'll have to go to Pineville that day anyhow, with some garden truck, an' I can sort o' slip into the show on' see the fun jest as easy 's not,'" muttered Silas, in a conversation with his conscience, as he decided upon this bit of stolen pleasure.

As for Alvira, no pangs of conscience troubled her or disturbed the pleasure of her bicycle lessons, and every bit of spare time, when Silas was out of the way, was spent in practicing upon the wheel. After the first few lessons, she had sent by Lucinda and bought a second-hand wheel, which she kept hidden in the attic when not in use.

"Dear me, Alvira, how rheumaticy you must be a gettin'," said he, noticing her frequent use of arnica and witch-hazel.

"Well, suppos'n I be, I guess I'll get over it," answered Alvira, a little crossly.

As circus day drew near, Lucinda had at last aroused in Alvira a desire to go with the bicycle party, and her success in mastering the wheel so elated her that she finally consented to go, one of them. But how to avoid Silas? Having his own little plans afoot, he unconsciously helped her out.

"I'm a goin' out peddling garden truck," said he, as the day dawned clear and sunny.

"Where to. Silas? Down to Pineville?" asked Alvira, a little anxiously.

"Well, I may fetch up there sometime during the day," answered Silas evasively, "I've quite a number o' customers along the way, you know."

"Yes," said Alvira, thoughtfully, watching him as he drove slowly away.

A little later, Alvira mounted her bicycle and started for the place where the ladies were to meet.

Now Alvira, on the wheel, was an altogether different Alvira from the one Silas knew. In spite of her flesh, she sat lightly and easily, perfectly erect, her hands resting lightly upon the handle bars, her feet moving easily up and down, as though walking, her breath coming and going naturally, as she held a bit of gum between her teeth. Her short gray skirt and white shirtwaist and small close cap of gray cloth, beneath which her dark hair with its streaks of white was smoothly brushed, was vastly becoming. In fact, Alvira had taken to the wheel as a duck to the water, and seemed perfectly at home as she spun along the hoad. In her efforts to avoid a meeting with Silas, she took a round-a-bout way, branching off from the main road in several places, so it was quite a little past the stated hour that she arrived at the place of meeting.

To her surprise, there was no one there, and thinking she was too early instead of too late, Alvira stepped from her wheel and sat down in a shady spot to await the coming of the party. The time slipped by and still no sign of her friends, and once more mounting her wheel, Alvira determined to go in search of them.

In all her life, it seemed to Alvira, she had never felt so care-free and happy. Gliding swiftly along the shady country road, made fragrant with the breath of pine woods, and sweet-smelling wild flowers, she almost forgot her destination, till she found herself in the crowded village street. Fearing recognition, she rode swiftly along to the circus grounds, secured a ticket, and passed in through the big gate.

A medley of sights and sounds greeted her bewildered eyes, and for a few moments she stood leaning upon her wheel and gazed about her. There was the huge mammoth tent, and the usual number of smaller ones, the drawing cards set forth in gay colored pictures outside. By the sounds of music, shouts of laughter and clapping of hands that issued from the big tent, Alvira concluded the show had begun.

"Dear me, I never can find Lucinda an' the rest inside that tent, I know," she muttered to herself, scarcely knowing what to do next.

Suddenly, from one of the smaller tents, there came a number of people, men and women in bicycle costume, each with a wheel. Alvira's face lighted up as she pushed her ways towards them.

"There's Lucinda now, thank goodness," she cried aloud.

Obstructed by the crowd, the last of the bicyclists was just vanishing inside the tent when Alvira followed close behind. Inside, each mounted a wheel and rode swiftly into a big ring, the one whom she supposed was Lucinda being one of the first. Determined to catch up with her at all costs, Alvira jumped up on her wheel and followed on. Inside the ring they quickly formed a line, a bell rang, and away they all flew like the wind. With her eyes fixed on Lucinda, Alvira peddled away with all her might, yet still she kept far ahead. Round and round the ring they went, the band playing loudly, the people shrieking and clapping hands.

"Look at the fat one! I'll bet on the fat one!" shouted a rough boy in the audience, and the people laughed and screamed the louder.

Gathering her strength for a final speed, Alvira dashed forward and with a mighty effort she rushed passed the supposed Lucinda Peters. A bell sounded, a great shout arose from the people, and a man thrust a flag into Alvira's hand as she stepped from her wheel. Her head was in whirl, her heart beat heavily, as she gazed about that sea of strange faces. The other riders were moving quickly from the ring, and for the first time, Alvira realized that they were all strangers to her.

A sudden trembling seized her, a sort of wild horror of her situation took from her the last bit of strength, and her shaking limbs refused their support.

"Look out there! Out of the way!" shouted a voice in her ear as she staggered along. Too late. The hoof of a horse

struck her down, a great wheel passed over her bicycle, crushing it to atoms, and the darkness of night fell upon Alvira.

From the upper tier of seats an old farmer sprang up as he saw her fall, and elbowing his way downward he pushed his way to her side. Waving back all offers of help, he lifted the unconscious woman, partly in his arms, he dragged her out into the open air, saying,

"This lady is my wife, gentlemen, an' I'll take care on her."

Silas' face was white as chalk, his eyes wild and staring, when Alvira returned to consciousness and saw him bending over her.

"Is it you, Silas, oh! how glad I am!" cried she, grasping his hand as if she would never ease her hold.

"Yes, Alvira, it's me all right, but blamed if I'm sure it's you, though," answered Silas, looking her over curiously. "An' where in time did you larn to ride a bicycle?"

"Take me home, Silas, an' I'll tell you all about it," said his wife, rising painfully to her feet and brushing the dirt from her clothes. "I guess I can get to the wagon if it's pretty handy, I suppose my wheel is completely ruined, anyway, so let it stay where 'tis," added she, as she limped along beside her husband.

Not until they were well started on their homeward ride did Silas speak again, but at last his curiosity could be kept back no longer.

"I vow, Alvira, ef you aint the smartest woman I know on," he burst out admiringly. "Who'd ever suppose you'd win a bicycle race in a circus."

"I didn't know I was a racin, Silas, as true as I live, I didn't," answered Alvira meekly, "I was just a tryin' to ketch up with that first woman, who I thought was Lucinda Peters."

"Well, ye did, Alvira, an' beat her all to nothin'. Why, when the man gin ye that flag I jest hollered louder than any boy around me."

"But you didn't know it was me, Silas, did you?" said Alvira.

“Well, I kin o’ thought it was, ’n yet I couldn’t believe my own eyes, till that horse hit you. Then somethin’ told me ’twas you sure.”

Alvira shuddered as she moved a little closer to his side, and Silas glanced at her with a queer expression on his wrinkled face.

“Came in sort o’ handy havin’ me down there jest in the nick o’ time, didn’t it, Alvira?”

“I never was so thankful for anything in all my life!” said Alvira, fervently. “But I really didn’t care about goin’ to the circus, an’ it was all Lucinda’s doin’s that I went,” and Alvira told Silas the whole story of the bicycle lessons.

Silas listened thoughtfully, and rode some distance before answering.

“Well, Alvira, we’ve both found out how deceitful is the human heart, an’ how quickly tribulation follows upon wrong doin’. But, atter all ’s said an’ done, you did jest ride that wheel splendid, an’ I’m goin’ to buy you a bran’ new bicycle the first chance I get.”

And he did.

MESSAGES OF LOVE.

Spirits of loved ones hovering near,
Whispering in accents tender and clear,
Comforting me when weary and sad,
Easing my burdens and making me glad.

Filling my heart with peace and rest,
Pointing the way that for me is best,
Telling of victories for me to win,
Leading me up from paths of sin.

Wiping away from my eyes the tears,
That start when I think of vanishing years,
Murmuring songs of joys to come,
When at last I reach my Heavenly home.

TILDY ANN'S MINCE PIES.

"There wa'n't a mite o' meat in 'em!" said Mrs. Josiah Holden, with a contemptuous sniff. "An' for my part I call it downright deceitful in Tildy Ann Perkins, to pass 'em off for genuine meat pies."

"Why, Mis' Holden! No one in the world would ever dream o' such a thing; for they were about the tastiest pies I ever put in my mouth," answered Hannah Peabody, looking up in surprise, from the vest she was making for Josiah.

"Oh, yes, they were tasty enough, I know, an' calculated to deceive one as to what was in 'em. But I happen to know that they were made after that receipt for mock mince pies, that I gave Tildy Ann, a year ago, an' cracker crumbs are used instead o' meat. Now as long as the prize was offered for the best mince pies, an' all the rest o' the women o' the society made 'em o' meat an' suet, an' all the good things we could crowd into 'em, it seems sort o' queer an' unfair that Tildy Ann's mock mince pies should have won the quilt."

Mrs. Holden bit off her thread with a snap, and rocked herself back in her wooden rocker a little excitedly, but Hannah sewed on quietly a few moments before she spoke.

"Yes, it does seem a little odd, that is a fact," said she at last. "But I've noticed that most folks make their pies so rich it spoils the flavor. Now Tildy Ann's were so delicate in taste, an' the crust was so light they'd fairly melt in your mouth. An' as long as no one knew the difference I don't know why she hasn't won the quilt fairly enough."

"That's just as you've a mind to think, Hannah, an' I don't agree with you," answered Mrs. Holden quickly. "An' I'm a-goin' to tell the rest o' the society what I know about them pies. Then if they all agree with me, we'll just go to Tildy Ann Perkins an' tell her that as long as she had used that receipt, she had not won the quilt honest, and that we'd decided to try again at the next supper."

Hannah dropped her sewing in her lap, and her dark eyes flashed indignantly, as she glanced at her neighbor through her glasses.

“Do you mean to say, Mis’ Holden, you’d take that quilt away from Tildy Ann?” asked she.

“Yes, I would, Hannah, for accordin’ to my idee, it don’t belong to her any more ’n it does to me. Dear me, I never once thought but o’ course I’d get it, an’ I did the most work on it o’ any one. Then the center piece is made o’ some o’ grandma Holden’s yellow satin petticoat, I’d saved ever since I was a girl, an’ Marie Jane drew out that lovely picture o’ the church, an’ it was the best thing she’d ever done, so natural. I wouldn’t let any one but myself work on it, an’ I spent hours over it. An’ to think o’ its bein’ hid up in Tildy Ann Perkins’s shabby little bedroom.”

Tears of envy and vexation sprang to the woman’s eyes, as her tongue fairly flew over the words that dropped from her lips, and the little tailoress watched her in silence.

“Oh! you needn’t sit lookin’ at me, so scornful like, Hannah Peabody,” cried the angry woman, as their eyes met. “Don’t I know that I’m makin’ an exhibition o’ myself, an’ showin’ out envy an’ malice an’ all uncharitableness, an’ aint I got good cause? I only want fair dealin’, an’ I say again that Tildy Ann Perkins’s mock mince pies hadn’t no business to win the quilt.”

Hannah Peabody rose quietly and folding up her work began to prepare for her homeward walk.

The afternoon sun had vanished in the western sky, and early shadows had darkened the farmhouse kitchen. Mrs. Holden’s substantial form, as it swayed to and fro in her wooden rocker, was the only sound that broke the silence for a short time.

“Mis’ Holden,” said she, “do you know if Tildy Ann has got her pension yet?”

“No, I don’t,” snapped the woman, still rocking swiftly.

“Has she had any carpets to weave this winter?” asked Hannah.

"I'm sure I don't know that, either," said Mrs. Holden, "I sent my rags to the mill."

"But that is the only way Tildy Ann has to earn money," said Hannah. "An' I'm afraid she is pretty poor, Mis' Holden."

"Oh, I don't call any one poor that owns their own house," answered she coldly, "an' I guess Tildy Ann Perkins is as well off as most of us."

Hannah's eyes flashed.

"You know better than that, Mis' Holden, an' so do I," said she. "An' if Tildy Ann has got a house o' her own she can't eat it."

"Nobody wants her to," answered the other, quickly.

Hannah opened the door and stepped out into the gathering twilight.

"Well, good-night, Mis' Holden," said she, struggling with the angry retort that rose to her lips.

"Good night, Hannah," and the door closed between them.

As Hannah walked briskly along the country road, her thoughts flew backward over the events of the past week. A church fair had been held by the women of the little parish, at which the quilt, that Mrs. Holden seemed to covet so greatly, had played an important part. Nearly every woman had had a share in furnishing the material for it, and in its making. In the first place it had been used as a snare to gather in silver coins, by guessing the number of pieces of which it was composed. As no one came anywhere near the correct answer, it was decided to give it to the woman who should furnish, at the supper given the last night of the fair, the best mince pies. To the surprise of all, and the chagrin of not a few, Tildy Ann Perkins won the prize. From the minister, down to the youngest Sunday-school scholar, the decision was unanimous, and the half dozen pies that Tildy Ann had scattered among the tables vanished like dew before the sun.

Tildy Ann Perkins was the lonely widow of a veteran of the war of the rebellion. She lived in a cottage house, known for miles around as "the little yallar," so named because of

its original vivid color of yellow paint, which, however, the storms of many seasons had nearly obliterated. Save for the cottage, and its small garden plot, the widow Perkins was penniless, and her only income was derived from what she could earn by weaving rag carpets for the country people round about. For several years she had been trying to obtain a widow's pension in return for her husband's service in the great struggle, but for some unknown reason it had thus far failed to reach her.

Hannah Peabody's homeward walk lay past the "little yallar," and a sudden impulse made her pause and knock at the door. It was a cold night in early spring, and the sharp air made Hannah shiver even through her warm wraps. A short, dry cough greeted her as the door opened, and a woman's pale face peered at her through the gathering gloom.

"Why, Tildy Ann! you look as white as a ghost! You aint sick, be ye?" exclaimed she, stepping quickly inside and closing the door.

"Oh, no, Hannah, only jest a bit run down, comin' spring," answered Tildy Ann, in a low soft voice that sounded musical beside Hannah's shrill tones. "It's cold, aint it?"

"Well, I should say it was, Tildy Ann, an' goodness! ye haint got half a fire either," and she seized a stick of wood from the small woodbox and threw it beside the half-burned log in the fireplace.

Tildy Ann sprang forward and drew it smoking from the embers. Then with a poker she stirred the log to a brighter glow. With a little laugh that ended in a cough she said, quietly:

"You see, Hannah, I can't afford to burn but one stick at a time jest now, for I'm a-tryin' to make my wood hold out till I get my pension. Seems to me it ought to come pretty soon, now, don't you think so, Hannah?" the soft voice grew eager with her words.

"Land! I should think it had!" said Hannah. "It's been on the way long enough."

"Oh, well, I knew it would take some time, there is so much

red tape about these things an' I shall be only too thankful to get it at all. But, Hannah, wasn't it nice that I won the quilt at the fair? Why, when they spoke o' givin' it to the one who made the best mince-pies, I thought I could not even try, for, you see, Hannah, I hav'n't had a bit o' meat in the house all winter. Then I happened to think o' that receipt Mis' Holden gave me, an' I jest made 'em by that. Well, to see the way every one eat 'em I guess no one cared if there wa'n't no meat in 'em. The minister ate two pieces, an', do you know, Josiah Holden came to me with his mouth full an' a big piece in his hand, an' he says to me, 'Well, Tildy Ann, Mis' Holden thinks she can beat the world on mince pies. But accordin' to my idee, she crowds too much suet an' spice into 'em, an' these ere o' yourn beat 'em all to nothin'.' I did have to laugh, Hannah, I couldn't help it. Another thing that makes me glad to have the quilt is that when we was a-makin' it I couldn't seem to find a piece o' silk good enough for a square till I thought o' the blue silk handkerchief I gave to my husband when he went to war. It went all through with him, an' it looks as bright now as ever. Well, I made my square for the quilt out o' that, an' worked it all over with little white stars an' put John's initials in one corner. I didn't tell anyone what 't was made of, 'cause I'd saved it so many years, an' it was sort o' hard to give it up, for then I never dreamed it would come back to me." Tildy Ann laughed happily as she paused. "It's been so cold I've moved my bed out here an' the quilt shows off in great style, Hannah, an' I'd like to light up an' let you see for yourself, but to tell the truth, I hav'n't a candle in the house. So when I've burned my allowance o' wood, I jest go to bed, an' I tell you what, Hannah, I've slept lots warmer since I had the quilt."

Many thoughts buzzed through Hannah's active brain, as she listened to Tildy Ann's low-voiced talk, yet an unusual reserve held her silent.

"I don't mind telling you, Hannah, though I wouldn't like to say it to every one, that this winter has been the most try-

ing of any I have known, an' my faith in the Lord's promises have been tested to the uttermost," continued Tildy Ann, her gentle voice trembling a little. "But when I feel the worst I just say to myself, 'The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want,' an' then my faith sort o' comes back, an' I believe that the Lord will help me yet."

"Yes, Tildy Ann, He surely will," said Hannah, in softened tones, as she once more stepped out into the night.

For the next few days a heavy rainstorm made the roads so impassable that Hannah Peabody was forced to remain quietly at home, yet her anxious thoughts dwelt constantly with the inmate of the "little yallar." A sudden cold kept her house-bound a few days more, when Mrs. Holden sent her husband with the horse and buggy to bring her back with him to finish his vest. As she stepped into the spare room to lay aside her outer garments the first thing that met her eyes was the prize quilt, spread out in all its importance on the best bed.

If a bona fide ghost had risen up before her, Hannah could not have felt a colder chill of horror and dismay. For an instant she gazed at it in stunned silence, then whirling about she faced the woman in the next room.

"Mis' Holden," cried she, her voice trembling with indignation, "where did you get that quilt?"

A dull red spread over the woman's heavy face, yet her eyes met Hannah's defiantly.

"I told you, Hannah, what I intended to do, and I've done it, an' the quilt's mine, for the rest all said my pies was the best anyhow," said she.

"An' what did Tildy Ann say when you went after it?" asked Hannah, her heart beating painfully as she thought of that poor woman's distress.

"Oh! she looked scared to pieces," said Mrs. Holden contemptuously, "an' said she'd no idee o' bein' deceitful about the pies, an' that she didn't know as mince pies meant always meat pies. An' then she took the quilt off the bed an' folded it up an' give it to me without another word."

Hannah turned and walked swiftly toward the door.

"Where be you a-goin', Hannah?" said Mrs. Holden, watching her anxiously. But the slam of the heavy door was her only answer.

Swiftly Hannah's feet sped over the muddy road toward the "little yallar," her kind heart full of anxiety for Tildy Ann.

There was no evidence of life about the cottage, no vestige of smoke issued from the chimney. Failing to make herself heard from the front, Hannah hastened to the rear door, and after pounding and calling, for a few seconds, she threw her whole weight against it till the wooden button, that was its only bolt, gave way, and she stood inside the little cheerless kitchen.

All was cold and desolate, the fireless hearth and untidy condition telling but too plainly the absence of the mistress. With a sinking at her heart Hannah hastened into the next room. With but a swift glance at the black and yawning fireplace, filled with the ghosts of long dead fires, she stepped to the bed where poor Tildy Ann lay, covered only by two worn and ragged blankets. Bending over her, Hannah spoke her name, but a faint moan and a stare from two vacant eyes, was her only answer.

Seizing a heavy braided rug from the floor, she threw it over the nearly frozen woman, piling her own wraps on top of this. Then hurrying to the woodshed she gathered up a basket of chips and the remaining half dozen sticks of wood, the last of Tildy Ann's hoarded fuel, and soon they were burning briskly in the fireplace. Heating some water, and melting the frozen milk she found in a bowl, she forced a little of the warm liquid down the sick woman's throat. Then hastening to the door, she glanced eagerly up and down the country road, till she spied a neighboring farmer driving toward her with a load of cut wood. Motioning him to stop, Hannah stated the case in a few words, and soon a goodly pile of hard wood nearly filled the little woodshed, while the sympathetic farmer was hastening with all speed to the village in quest of the doctor. Like wildfire, the news of Tildy Ann's condition

spread through the little village, and many kind-hearted people hastened to the "little yallar" with offers of substantial help, that alas! seemed to have arrived all too late. With untiring devotion Hannah Peabody watched day and night beside the sickbed, and her tender heart was moved to deepest pity as she listened to Tildy Ann's delirious words, and realized with what uncomplaining patience she had borne the dire poverty of the long winter months.

At last the fight was over, the battle won, and thanks to Hannah's good nursing, Tildy Ann Perkins crept slowly but surely back into the sunshine of returning health. About this time another parish supper was held in the vestry of the village church. With the spirit of a warrior who wins all or none, Hannah Peabody rose and called the attention of the gathered assembly. With characteristic brevity, she told the story of Tildy Ann Perkins's mock mince pies, and her reason for using that particular receipt. Then she asked all of those who had eaten of them, to testify once more as to their merits for winning the prize quilt.

As before, the vote was unanimous, and in spite of Mrs. Josiah Holden's but too evident reluctance, the quilt, with its precious square of loyal blue, was placed once more in Tildy Ann's possession.

But best of all was the arrival of the long delayed pension, that lifted the little widow forever above want, and turned the humble "little yallar" into a home of comfort and plenty.

ST. VALENTINE'S DAY.

Cupid rules the world today,
Many the pranks he's sure to play;
Saucily flinging his love-tipped darts,
Heedless of wounds or tender smarts;
None are safe, not e'en the old;
Hearts both sad, and hard and cold,
All are touched by Cupid's sway,
Sporting merry on Valentine's Day.

THE HEART OF HER HUSBAND.

The rush and roar of the incoming train, made the passengers start quickly to their feet, and they were swept on with the outward bound crowd.

"Change your mind, Margaret, and come with me. It's not too late, even now," said the man holding the woman's arm closely, as they hurried along.

"I cannot, Oscar, the boys need me here," answered she quickly.

"But has the boys' father no claim, Margaret?" asked he.

"Yes, Oscar, surely, and when the boys are through school, I will come to you. It will only be a few years now."

"All aboard!" shouted the conductor.

For a brief instant the man and woman clung together, then a cloud of black smoke hid the vanishing train from view.

"Only a few years now—"

His wife's last words kept repeating themselves over and over again, in his brain, and Oscar Houghton smiled somewhat bitterly.

The coolness of her tone, the seeming lack of affection for him, or interest in his welfare, made the loneliness of his situation more intense. In a quiet corner of the smoker, with his face hidden behind a newspaper, his thoughts kept pace with the swiftly flying train.

Two years before, when his physician had warned him that he must live in a warmer climate, he had tried to persuade his wife to give up her Northern home, and take up her abode in the sunny South. The real Northerner's prejudice for the South and its environments were too strong within her, and she had let him go alone, to seek for the elixir of life.

In less than a year he had found both health and wealth; or, at least, a certain amount of both, with the promise of

future blessings. Then, with a hopeful heart, he had made a trip north, to bring back with him his wife and boys. But no. His wife was comfortably settled in her father's home, who was a clergyman in a Massachusetts town, and the boys were doing so well at a good school, it would never do to take them away, till they were older. Thus she over-ruled his persuasions, and he went back alone. Another year had passed away; a year that had fulfilled its promise, in health and prosperity, and yet, the joy it gave was tempered with acute longings for wife and children. Again, he had journeyed north, with pleasant anticipations for the future, yet alas, the return trip is made alone. Swiftly his thoughts leap through space, and rest upon the beautiful spot, in the city of San Antonio, that so-called "Garden of Texas," where he had made his home. How like a mockery it seemed as he thought of the empty house awaiting him. The lovely abode he had prepared, with such loving forethought, for his dear ones. Ah! could Margaret but imagine the beauties of that southern city, that sits queenlike on the banks of the crystalline stream that winds her crown like a thread of diamonds. Could she but dream of the romantic bridges that span the river in a dozen places, the shady banks fresh and beautiful, the vineclad trees, semi-tropical plants and green lawns, that mark the course of the river. Could she wander in thought, even, through those quaint old streets, where still stand the Mexican adobes, with the moss of a century growing on their roofs. In vain had been Oscar's vivid word paintings of that beautiful spot; in vain had been his repetition of those thrilling historical events, that are clustered in the annals of San Antonio. All had failed to awaken in Margaret the slightest interest. Her answer was always the same.

"You know, Oscar, that I detest the South, and always shall."

And so it happens, that, as Oscar Houghton steps once more within the city that is his adopted home, the weight of his disappointment lies heavily upon him. It is the hour of vespers in the cathedral of San Fernando. The deep notes of the

organ, the chanting voices of the choir, float upon the air with solemn sweetness. A sudden impulse draws Oscar into that vast interior. It is like entering a new world. Outside the heat is intense, and the air is filled with the din of every day life. Here the flower-scented air fans his brow with delicious coolness, while the grand sweet music falls upon his ear like a tender benediction. His eyes rest upon the mass of kneeling figures with curious awe. High and low, rich and poor, Spanish and American mingle their prayers together. The shawl of the Mexican woman and the lace mantilla of the high born Spanish dame are bowed side by side. Suddenly the organ peels forth a louder strain. The people rise. The great doors are flung apart, and that mass of humanity move outward. Jolted by the crowd, the button of his coat sleeve catches the lace of a passing mantilla.

The slim brown hand of its wearer is thrust forth, and quickly detaches the wayward lace and Oscar has a glimpse of two dark eyes and dazzling white teeth, as she smiles in response to his hurried,—

“Beg pardon, Senorita.”

The Spanish girl glides swiftly past, and is lost in the crowd. Outside the swinging music of a Mexican band sounds in rude contrast to the solemn strains that issue from the old cathedral. With bold insolence the gay musicians push against the people as they pass along, and one impudent fellow seizes the slim waist of a pretty Spanish girl and whirls her about in an impromptu dance. With a cry of alarm, the girl struggles to release herself, but the man only laughs and holds her more firmly. Indignantly, Oscar watches the unequal struggle, then with one well directed blow, he hurls the insulting fellow far out into the dusty street. Turning to the girl, who stands pale and trembling, a little apart from the crowd, he says anxiously,—

“Are you hurt Senorita?”

“Only a little frightened, Senor Houghton,” answered the girl, smiling.

Oscar looked surprised as she speaks his name.

"You have the advantage, Senorita," said he lifting his hat.

"My name is Dolores Guerrerro, and my home is just across the way from the Senor's new house," said she.

"What, is that romantic moss-crowned adobe, by which I daily pass, your home?" said Oscar in pleased surprise.

"Yes, Senor. It has been the home of the Guerreros for more than a century," answered the girl gravely.

"I am delighted that I have so charming a neighbor," said Oscar gallantly, "and as our way is the same, shall I not see you safely to your door?"

A swift smile and a musical "Thank you, Senor," and the two walked on together, followed closely by the girl's duenna.

A little later, having parted with Senorita Guerrerro, Oscar Houghton passes into his own grounds, whistling softly to himself. The little adventure has diverted him, and he runs up the steps of the piazza, with a lighter heart than he would have thought possible, a few hours before. The acquaintance thus begun ripens into friendship, as the days glide swiftly onward. It was such a simple, natural thing, to pause for a daily chat with the pretty Spanish girl as he passes her door, or to wander together, through his own spacious grounds, in the early twilight when the crimson sunset trails a welcome to the rising moon; and in the presence of a discreet duenna, to mingle the smoke of his cigar with that of her dainty cigarette. Or, sitting upon his vine-shaded piazza, he listens to the sweet tones of her guitar, till he drifts into a state of content, and lives in the present only. Margaret's weekly letters arrive with dutiful regularity, yet they seem to Oscar but the echo of an existence, long past and nearly forgotten, while the beautiful present filled with subtle charm, takes firmer hold of his senses. At last there comes a day when, having fallen asleep three times, during the perusal of one of Margaret's long letters, he starts to his feet, troubled and ashamed. Long and deeply he ponders, then, with sudden conviction, he believes there is but one course to pursue, and he sits down and writes Margaret a letter.

It is some two weeks later, that one afternoon, Margaret Houghton sits alone in the cosy parsonage parlor of her Northern home. The day is cool, and a fire burns brightly in the open grate. Her usually busy hands are folded idly in her lap, and her face looks worn and weary. A vague feeling of dissatisfaction and unrest fills her heart, for though Margaret Houghton is a thoroughly good woman, yet like so many others, she could truly say, "The mistakes of my life have been many."

Into the midst of her musings comes the postman's ring, and a flush of expectation colors her cheeks, as she opens Oscar's letter. It is brief and to the point.

"Dear Margaret:—" it ran, "As it seems impossible to overcome your prejudice for the South, where, if I would live at all, I must henceforth make my home, perhaps it would be best to have a legal separation, and thus end the present uncomfortable state of affairs. Then, if I so desired, I could form new ties, for I quite agree with the scriptural saying that "it is not well for man to dwell alone." Of course I shall provide for you and the boys, as at present, and feel the same interest in your welfare. Judge me as kindly as you can, Margaret, and write me your wishes in this matter. Oscar."

The letter falls from her cold hand, and as though icy fingers clutched her throat, her breath seems to leave her body, and the blackness of night enfolds her. As her vision clears, she realizes for the first time, the utter selfishness of her own heart, and the coldness of her nature. And yet she sees, for the first time, that beneath that crust of cold selfishness there lies an undercurrent of passionate tenderness and love, of infinite trust and faith in the man she had married. Oh! why had she been so blind? Why had she not seen her duty more clearly? Why had she not followed more closely her marriage vow, to leave all, and cleave unto her husband? And now,—was it too late to undo the wrong? Too late to win back the love, which she had so carelessly let slip from her hold? With a moan, she buries her face in her hands, and cries aloud, "Oh, God! give me back the heart of my husband!"

That night the southward bound train carried among its passengers the wife of Oscar Houghton. Not an instant had she lost in making her preparations, yet now, behind the curtains of her sleeper, she lies with wide staring eyes, chafing inwardly, at the slow moving train. The journey seems interminable, yet, like all earthly pilgrimages, it comes to an end at last.

Her first glimpse of that beautiful city is a surprise to Margaret's Northern eyes. The balmy air, fragrant with the breath of many flowers, soothes the fever in her veins, and unconsciously she takes new courage. With womanly instinct, she goes directly to a hotel, removes the dust of travel, and forces herself to take a short rest. Then, daintily and freshly attired, she orders a carriage and is driven to her husband's home. It is just at dusk of a lovely day, and Oscar Houghton leans back in his easy chair, as he sits upon the broad veranda, and blows the smoke from his cigar with a thoughtful air. In a gay colored hammock swinging gently to and fro, reclines the Spanish girl, Dolores Guerrero. A cigarette is between her red lips, while her fingers wander idly across the strings of a guitar. It is the musical twang of this instrument that greets Margaret's ear, as the carriage pauses before the gate. Oscar starts quickly forward at sight of that strangely familiar figure.

"Is it possible, Margaret, that it is you?" he exclaimed a little coldly.

Margaret's lips grew pale though she forces a smile, as she answers brightly, "Yes, dear, I thought I would give you a surprise," and she holds up her face for a warmer greeting.

During the days that followed Margaret's arrival South, Oscar's state of mind was a mixture of joy and regret. No mention had been made of his letter. Apparently oblivious of it Margaret takes her place at the head of his household. In a marvelously short time, her personality has diffused itself through every room, till they have a home-like charm, before unknown. Mystified and wandering, Oscar watches Margaret with a new light in his eyes. Never in the days of their court-

ship had she seemed more charming. Graciously, she ever includes the pretty Señorita within their home circle, and Oscar shrinks within himself as he draws the contrast between them.

Oh! if it were only possible to recall that letter! The days and weeks slip by, and a month has flown. Two months, and Margaret feels that she must make the final test of her husband's love. Once more they are sitting alone in the gloaming. The scent of roses and the soft twitter of nesting birds fill the air. With a supreme effort Margaret speaks.

"Well, Oscar, I have made you a nice long visit. Don't you think I had better go home now?"

Oscar's face pales a little in the moonlight.

"What do you mean, Margaret? Is not this your home? Have you not been happy here?" said he quickly.

"Yes, Oscar, very happy. And you?" answers Margaret, her voice trembling slightly.

Oscar moves to his wife's side, and draws her within the circle of his arm.

"Margaret," said he with a swift caress, "the weeks that have just gone have been the happiest that I have known for years. You cannot be so cruel as to leave me alone again."

Margaret looks earnestly into her husband's face as she answers slowly:

"But, Oscar, what about a legal separation?"

"Oh, Margaret! I was mad, to have written you that letter. I had begun to believe that it had never reached you. Will you not forgive and forget it?" cried Oscar, his voice full of regret.

"Yes, Oscar, I do forgive, though I hope I may never forget that it has taught me where my true home is—"

"Here within the heart of your husband," finished Oscar tenderly.

Every human soul today,
Past youth's golden prime,
Bears upon the heart alway
Finger-marks of time.

THE LOST MANUSCRIPT.

It was late in the summer that the old Spaulding homestead was burned to the ground. For more than a hundred years it had withstood the storms of the changing seasons. Three generations of Spauldings had dwelt beneath its roof, and the comedy and tragedy of human life had been enacted within its walls. Levi Spaulding, the last of his time and generation, had made his home there for more than forty years. He was a man of education and rare intelligence, a man of studious habits and thoughtful ways, a man of much importance to his own township, who was known throughout the county as an easy writer and a fluent speaker. Stress of circumstances had forced him to give up a larger sphere to return to the old homestead, there to till the soil and to take from Mother Earth the living she owes her children. For a number of years his leisure hours had been spent in writing a history of the town in which he was born, a work that would be of great value to the town's people when published. In his eightieth year the book was completed, but before it reached the hands of the publishers, the old homestead and all it contained was swept away by fire. His wife and granddaughter Mertice, a girl of twenty, made up his family at this time, his son and wife having died when Mertice was but a small child. The sunshine of the old homestead, the comfort and joy of her aged grandparents, was Mertice Spaulding. She was a girl of sterling character, with a beautiful face and a heart of gold. It had long been Levi Spaulding's pet scheme that the result of his literary labors should be his beloved granddaughter's wedding dower. Alas! nothing but ashes remained of those once fair hopes, and the old man's spirit sank beneath the blow.

The site of the old homestead was a beautiful one, though lonely in the extreme. Five miles from the village of A—,

it stood high upon a hilltop, with a background of woods and mountains, a wide sweep of sky, made gorgeous by the ever-changing sunsets, above, green meadows with silvery gleaming brooks and wild flower blooms, below. With the nearest neighbor a mile away, there was but little chance of succor in their hour of need. A defective chimney was supposed to have been the cause of the fire, and their feeble efforts were useless to quench its power. In one short day the treasures of a lifetime, the heirlooms of a century, the hopes of years had vanished in smoke.

It was the night following the fire that Mertice Spaulding and her lover, John Wilder, stood in the early gloaming beside the ruins of the old homestead. With her grandparents she had found a temporary home in the village, and she and John had driven out to view again the smouldering embers of that cruel fire. The girl's face looked pale and worn in the dim light, yet the blue eyes glanced trustingly into her lover's face, as she said with a smile:

"I shall make but a poor bride now, John, for with the loss of grandfather's book, I have lost my wedding dower."

A slight color crept into the young man's face as he answered a little bitterly: "What a pity that even that much couldn't have been saved."

"I know it, John," answered Mertice, "and yet that is nothing compared with the loss of our dear old home, the home where grandpa and grandma have lived so long. It is for them, John, that I grieve, not for us who are young and strong and can make a new home so easily. But to have such a loss come to the aged is like tearing out their heartstrings, like uprooting the very source of their lives. We must be very tender of them, John, and make them our first care."

"Perhaps you would like to postpone our marriage for that purpose, Mertice?" said John, quickly.

Mertice's face crimsoned hotly.

"Why, no, John, I thought perhaps we had better hasten it instead, so that we might help them to make a new home the sooner," said she, her voice trembling with the effort of her

words. "Dear, I know that you love me too well to blame me for thus speaking," she added, leaning against him confidently.

For an instant John Wilder did not speak, though his arm tightened about the girl's waist.

"Of course, Mertice," said he at last, yet his words sounded cold to her strained ear, "it's all right for you to speak, and yet I'm not sure that I want to be saddled with two old people to begin life with."

As though he had struck her a blow, Mertice shrank from his hold, and her lips whitened as she answered slowly:

"You shall not be saddled with them, John, nor with me either."

"There! Mertice, don't get angry!" said John, impatiently. "But as things have turned out I think it will be wiser for us to wait a while, rather than to hasten matters."

"I am perfectly willing to wait, John, forever," answered Mertice, with trembling lips.

"That is for you to decide, Mertice, though I never should use so unkind a word," answered the young man, coldly.

A deadly sinking at her heart seemed to benumb the girl's senses. Silently she watched John as he stepped out into the road to where his restless horse stood pawing the ground. The shadows of night had settled about them and the charred and blackened ruins yawned with deeper gloom.

"Come, Mertice, it is growing late; hadn't we better be going back?" said John, loosening the horse, and turning to where she had so lately stood. Yet still, she did not speak. "Mertice! Mertice! where are you?" called he again, striving to peer through the darkness. Still no sound but the whip-poor-will's plaintive note answered him.

With a muttered curse, he led his uneasy horse back to a tree and fastened him securely. Then stepping quickly into the space about the ruins, he searched carefully among the shrubs and bushes for the missing girl. Suddenly a wild anger seemed to quench his fears and he exclaimed fiercely:

"Confound the girl! What does she mean by hiding from me like this? It would serve her right to leave her to find her way home alone."

"And be the act of a coward like John Wilder," said a man's voice from the roadside.

John started and faced the intruder angrily. He was a tall man wearing a farmer's suit and a wide straw hat. Over his shoulder he carried a scythe.

"Who are you, and what are you doing here?" demanded John, hotly.

Leaning his scythe against the stone wall, the man took off his big straw hat and fanned himself deliberately.

"Well," said he slowly, "my name 's Hiram Prentice, an' I'm a friend an' neighbor of the folks that have just been burned out of house an' home. An' I've my opinion of a man that 'll talk the way you have to the girl you pretend to care for."

"So, you've been listening, have you?" cried John, angrily, striding toward him with uplifted arm. "Well, take that for your impudence."

A grasp of iron stayed the impending blow, while the young farmer, with the ease of a giant, lifted John bodily and flung him into the waiting carriage. Turning the horse, he tossed the reins to John with contemptuous scorn.

"There, git!" said he, briefly. "An' I'll see that no harm comes to Mertice Spaulding."

The startled horse sprang away and was soon down the hill and out of sight. As the sound of the wheels died away in the distance, Hiram walked quietly across the road, and paused within the shade of a huge maple. Crouched against its massive trunk was Mertice, her face buried in her hands. For a little while the young man watched her silently.

"I'm thinkin' o' walkin' down to the village, Mertice, an' if you don't mind, I'll walk 'long o' you," said he at last, a little diffidently.

The girl rose slowly to her feet.

"Thank you, Hiram, I'll be very glad of your company," answered she, and the two stepped out into the dusty highway.

By this time the moon had risen and was flooding the world with its glorious light. Like a silver thread the road wound in and out among the green trees, now past open fields or new mown hay, now past a solitary farmhouse, and now past fragrant meadows, sweet with the breath of cowslips, and musical with the hum of insect life. To the country bred girl the five-mile walk meant no unusual fatigue, yet now her heavy heart made leaden the feet that carried her. With an effort she hid her wounds with cheerful talk, and to Hiram Prentice that moonlight walk and the sweet face of Mertice Spaulding left a memory that remained with him always.

Ten years have come and gone. Ten times has the earth awakened to springtime gladness and slept beneath the winter's ermine robes, and once more the glorious summer blesses the earth with its wealth of bloom. On the site of the old Spaulding homestead has risen a new dwelling, and the lives of the inmates have long since settled back into the peace and quite of other days. Although ninety years of age, Levi Spaulding is still a hale and hearty old man, vigorous in mind and body. After the first shock of the fire he had accepted the inevitable with patient resignation.

The loss of his book manuscript he had felt keenly, and ceased to write from that time. To Mertice Spaulding the years had flowed on quietly and uneventfully. Although John Wilder had come to her with apologies and excuses, she could not forget that dark hour beside the smouldering ruins of her old home. And so, when a little later he had left the village to seek employment elsewhere, she had said good-bye calmly, knowing in her heart that it was forever. A kind neighbor and a faithful friend was Hiram Prentice, and the years had not altered his faithfulness. It was on the tenth anniversary of the day of the fire that Hiram walked into the farmhouse kitchen with a bundle of papers in his hand. Tossing them into Mertice's lap, he said:

“Here’s something I found in the old dry well back of the house. I was cutting the grass, and by accident I pushed aside the flat stone that covered the well, and the first thing I spied was this roll of paper high and dry on a projecting stone. Perhaps you can tell me what it is.”

“Why, Hiram!” exclaimed Mertice, grasping the roll excitedly. “It’s grandpa’s manuscript that we thought was burned. How on earth could it have gotten into the old well?”

“I declare for ’t, Mertice,” cried grandma Spaulding, peering at the precious roll curiously, “I jest remember ’t I put ’em there myself, when the fire broke out, an’ I ’d clean forgot all about ’em.”

Levi Spaulding spoke never a word, yet his trembling fingers clung to that bundle of papers as to the hand of a long-lost friend.

Thus it happened that the long delayed book was finally published, and the name and fame of Levi Spaulding became inseparable with the annals of the old hill town. A considerable sum was realized from its sale, and, true to his first intention, the old man placed it in his granddaughter’s hands, saying quaintly:

“Better late than never, Mertice,” and a faint blush stole into the girl’s cheek as she thanked him.

It was soon after these events had transpired that Hiram Prentice strolled over to the Spaulding homestead one evening. As he approached the house he saw a stylish team standing by the roadside, while a man stood talking earnestly with Mertice as she leaned against the vine covered porch.

A second glance told him it was John Wilder, and though he had long believed that his own love was hopeless, his heart was filled with bitterness at the thought of the possible reconciliation of these old lovers. He was about to turn away, when to his surprise, the man suddenly walked to his waiting carriage, and, springing quickly in, drove rapidly down the hill and out of sight. With an irresistible impulse Hiram approached the girl.

“Am I to congratulate you, Mertice?” asked he as he stood beside her.

With brilliant eyes and crimson cheeks, she turned and faced him.

“Yes, Hiram! Congratulate me on my escape from the hands of a thoroughly selfish and unscrupulous man!” said she. “Oh, Hiram, do you not know that I value your friendship a thousand times more than the love of such a man as John Wilder?”

A flush rose in Hiram’s sunburned face, a new-born courage forced him to speak.

“But, Mertice, suppose that friendship had ripened into love, what then?”

“Then I should congratulate myself indeed,” answered Mertice, holding both hands to him with a smile that meant all things to Hiram Prentice.

FAITHLESS.

I thought I had something to cling to
As long as life should last;
That, amid life’s sea, you ever would be
A rock that stood firm and fast.

I thought your heart was the truest,
A heart all rubies and gold,
That time nor tide, nor aught beside,
Could alter or make grow cold.

I thought your love was the purest,
A love with a touch divine,
That had not its birth in the dross of earth,
Was stronger, more pure and fine.

I thought your faith was the strongest
That human faith could be,
And would waver not whate’er my lot,
But steadfast cling to me.

HULDAH'S CHRISTMAS DEBT.

“ ’Taint no use a talkin’, Huldah, I can’t spare the money, an’ that’s the end on’t.” Azariah Moore slammed down the wooden cover of his old-fashioned desk, and turned the key with a loud click.

“But it’s a debt, Azariah, a Christmas debt, an’ I know that Sabina expects us to give her something Christmas, sure. It’s two years now since she sent us that spring-rocker in the parlor, an’ I heard she told all around that it cost ten dollars. I think on’t every time I sit in ’t, an’ I don’t take a mite o’ comfort, nohow, an’ I sha’n’t till I’ve give her a present of equal value.”

Azariah’s clenched fist came down upon his desk with a bang, as he burst out angrily:

“That’s jest the very thing that’s a spilin’ the thoughts o’ Christmas, the world over! It’s a-gettin’ so that Christmas is a regular nuisance, instead o’ bein’ a time o’ peace an’ blessedness as the Lord intended. Folks make presents with the thought o’ gettin’ ’em all back, an’ are dreadful’ put out ef they don’t.”

“Now I’m jest goin’ to put a stop to ’t es far es we’re concerned, Huldah, an’ ef anyone sends us any more chairs an’ things, you may send ’em back an’ tell ’em we aint a-tradin’; we’ve got through.”

Huldah Moore watched her husband silently as he took down his old ulster and cap, and marched out of the house toward the barn. Long experience had taught her that when Azariah was “riled” apparent acquiescence was her wisest course. The dorr was no sooner closed that her discontent found vent in muttered words, as she bustled about, putting away the supper dishes.

“It’s a-gettin’ so Azariah ’s growin’ dreadful touchy every

time I ask for a cent o' money, Christmas or no Christmas!" said she. "An' I'd like to know ef the money aint mine es much as 't is hisn? I make the butter an' the cheese, take care o' the hens' eggs an' pluck the fowls for the market! An' Azariah jest puts away the money an' seems to think I don't need to use any on 't. Cousin Sabina Wood has allus been a good friend to me, an' she couldn't no more afford to give me that rocker, than I can to make her a present. That writin' desk I saw down to the village was jest ten dollars, an' I'd like to give it to Sabina, 'n' then I could take some comfort a-settin' in that rocker."

As the days sped onward, this thought dwelt constantly in Huldah's mind, though she said nothing to Azariah in regard to it. At last it wanted but a week before Christmas, when suddenly she came to a swift decision. It was a clear, cold day, and good sledding. Azariah had taken the two horses and had gone for a load of wood, and would not be at home before night. As the thought, which had taken possession of her, suddenly developed, she walked quickly to Azariah's desk, and selecting a key from a bunch she had taken from her pocket, she hastily opened it. From an old, black wallet she drew a roll of bank bills. Two tens and a five.

"There!" she exclaimed, "I knew Azariah had twenty-five dollars tucked away in that old wallet, an' I may as well have ten on 't as not. 'Taint right for him to be so close with me, an' I aint a-goin' to be so meechin' 'bout takin' what belongs to me as I have been, either. I suppose he'll be terrible riled when he finds it out. Well, Bixby told me he'd give me ten dollars for Bess's new calf, an' if I have to, I can sell her, though I don't want to a mite. Anyway my mind's made up to get that desk for Sabina, calf or no calf."

With these words she separated ten dollars from the other bills, put back the wallet, and closed and locked the desk. Huldah was a good walker, and the three miles to the village and back was easily accomplished before sundown. On her return she walked directly into the little, cold parlor, and bringing out the spring rocker, she placed it in the cosiest

corner of the pleasant sitting-room. Dropping down into its cushioned arms, she swayed to and fro with a luxurious sigh.

"I declare ef this aint the first real good rock I've had in this chair!" muttered she, contentedly. "Somehow I never quite dared let my whole heft down on the springs afore, but now 't I've sent Sabina that desk I'm jest a-goin' to set down solid an' take my comfort."

As the supper hour approached, and Azariah returned, her satisfaction seemed to lessen somewhat, and in spite of herself an uneasy dread, whenever her husband's eyes turned toward his desk, or glanced in the direction of the spring-rocker, disturbed her serenity. The days melted rapidly one into another, and it was sunrise of the day before Christmas. Each day Huldah had grown more and more nervous, till her fingers trembled, and her heart leaped to her throat whenever Azariah glanced at his desk.

As it happened, however, he had had no occasion to use the desk for a few days, and so had not discovered his loss. Suddenly Azariah's voice calling her from the barn, startled her.

"Huldah! Huldah! The calf is gone! Some tarnal thief has stolen him!" And sure enough! A broken window, the partly open barn door, and strange footprints in the snow, told the story.

"No chance o' gettin' that ten dollars back now!" muttered Huldah, with a sinking heart.

A little later Azariah walked hastily into the house, and going to his desk threw back the cover. A sudden weakness crept into Huldah's knees, and she sat down.

"I'm a-goin' to harness up an' take a look around for that calf, Huldah," said he. "An' while I'm about it I may as well go round by Tom Jones's an' pay the interest on the mortgage. It falls due the twenty-sixth, you know, but Tom's been sort o' crusty with me lately, an' he'd like nothin' better 'n a chance to foreclose. He aint a-goin to get it, though, no ef I know myself!" chuckled Azariah, still fumbling about in his desk. "Thunder 'n lightnin'! Huldah! Where's my wallet?" he burst out suddenly.

“Why, why, Azariah, aint it there?” answered Huldah, slowly.

“No 't aint’ I can’t find hide nor hair on’ t. Some pesky thief has got into the house an’ stole that, too, like es not. Huldah rose, and together they searched the desk thoroughly for the missing wallet, but in vain. What it meant she could not imagine, yet mingled with her fright was the thought, that now, Azariah need not know that she had taken the ten dollars.

“ ’Taint es if I could lay my hand on twenty-five dollars in cash, any minute!” said he. “I don’t see how I’m a-goin’ to get it nohow before the twenty-sixth. An’ Tom ’ll be after it bright an’ early, ’fore breakfast, sure.”

“Ye see now, Huldah, jest why I couldn’t spare the money for Christmas debts, es you call ’em.”

“Oh, Azariah! I ’d clean forgot about that interest!” said Huldah, meekly.

“Humph! that ’s jest like a woman!” growled Azariah, as he left the house to go in search of the stolen calf.

As soon as he was gone, Huldah made a more thorough search for the old wallet, yet it was nowhere to be found. Sinking down in the spring rocker, her thoughts grew more and more troubled. It couldn’t be possible that a thief had entered the house without her knowledge, and taken the wallet! And surely she had replaced it after subtracting the ten dollars. As her mind reverted to this act, a slight flush crept into her face. With an effort she strove to shake off the uncomfortable sensation.

“Dear me!” she muttered crossly. “Any one ’d think that I was the thief myself, I feel so sort o’ queer an’ streaked like. An’ I aint no call to either, for what ’s his’n’s mine, an’ what ’s mine ’s his’n. Land sakes, though, ef I’d once thought o’ that mortgage, I’d’a’ give up the idee o’ gettin’ Sabina that desk. But la! what’s done ’s done, though I’d like to know where ’n creation that wallet ’s gone to.”

Christmas dawned as gloriously, as it did that day so long ago, when the wise men knelt before that new-born babe. Mer-

rily the village church bells rang out a joyous peal, spreading the good tidings far and near. Brightly the sunshine streamed into Azariah Moore's pleasant farmhouse, and danced gleefully across the kitchen floor.

Alas! it was with heavy hearts that the inmates welcomed the new day. The stolen calf, the missing wallet, and the vexing thought of the mortgage, drove from Azariah's mind all feelings of Christmas joy, and Huldah arose, heavy eyed and weary, from a sleepless pillow. The hours dragged slowly on, and silent and morose, Azariah and Huldah sat down to their lonely Christmas dinner. Suddenly the woman's overstrained nerves gave way, and dropping her knife and fork, she burst into a storm of sobs and tears.

"What 's the matter with ye, Huldah, be ye sick?" exclaimed the astonished man, for not since their only son Joe had left home, five years before, had he heard his wife cry.

"Yes, I be, Azariah, sick an' tired o' feelin' like a thief! An' I wish that Sabina Wood never 'd a give me that spring rocker! an' that Christmas didn't come but once in ten years!" cried Huldah, hysterically.

"What makes ye feel like a thief, Huldah?" said Azariah, his voice growing cold and stern.

"'Caus' I took ten dollars out 'n that old wallet, an' bought Sabina a desk for Christmas, an' 'caus' you told me I couldn't have it, I've felt like a thief ever since," sobbed she.

"Where 's the rest on 't?" asked her husband.

"I don't know," answered Huldah.

"Well, I don't wonder 't ye feel like a thief, Huldah, 'caus' that's what ye be. An' ye aint no wife o' mine," said Azariah, his voice hoarse with anger, and rising, he took his hat and coat and left the house.

For the first time in Huldah Moore's life, a feeling of faintness so overpowered her that the room grew dark as night. Her tears seemed to congeal upon her cheeks, and her heart lay like lead in her bosom. This was a climax she had not foreseen. That Azariah would be "riled" and perhaps say a few cross words at her confession, she had expected, but

that he should actually say the cruel words that still rung in her ears, "ye aint no wife o' mine!" was a blow that crushed her utterly. Mechanically she moved about, doing the dishes, and tidying the room; then going to a closet she took from it her bonnet and cloak. Gathering a few garments together in a small bag, she tied her bonnet strings, and walked quietly from the house. The afternoon shadows were lengthening, and made dark spots upon the snowy whiteness of the road.

Huldah's face was white and set, as she hastened along, and her eyes glanced desperately about her, as if in farewell to each familiar object. On she went until within a mile of the village when weary and footsore she sank down upon the stone wall by the roadside.

"I don't know what I'm going to do, nor where I'm a-goin' to!" muttered the poor woman hopelessly. "There aint no one that'll take me in unless it's Sabina, an' like es not she won't when she finds I aint got no home to go back to. Oh, dear! oh, dear! who'd ever a-thought 't would come to this at my time o' life, an' on Christmas of all days in the year!" Covering her face, she wept silently.

Suddenly the sound of sleigh bells aroused her, and she started to her feet. In the dim light, with the blur of tears blinding her eyes, Huldah stepped directly in front of the approaching horse.

"Hello! there, look out!" cried a man's voice, as the occupant of the sleigh drew in his horse. But too late! Huldah had stumbled and fallen in a heap in the snow. Springing out, the man lifted her gently to her feet.

"Good heavens! mother, is it you?" cried he, as he looked into her face. And Huldah Moore knew that she leaned upon the strong arm of her only son.

"Oh! Joseph, the Lord must a-sent ye home to take care of your poor old mother, jest when she needed ye the most!" cried she, clasping her arms about his neck.

"Of course He did, mamma dear, and I'm going to do it, too," answered the young man, kissing her tenderly. "But

tell me how it happens you are so far from home this time of night?" questioned he as he lifted his mother into the sleigh, and seated himself beside her.

The feeling of joy and relief at her boy's return had swept all anger and despair from her heart. With his comforting presence beside her, and the sure knowledge that she was going back to the dear old home she had thought to desert, Huldah's courage and spirits returned.

"Why, ye see, Joseph, your father got a little riled over somethin' we were a-talkin' 'bout, an' I jest thought I'd take a little walk till he got cooled off," answered she cheerfully.

Joseph Laughed merrily.

"'T wouldn't be pa if he didn't get riled once in a while, would it, ma?" said he. "Hello! there he comes now. Merry Christmas, pa!"

Sure enough! Azariah's tall figure, coatless and hatless, was coming towards them with long strides. As he heard his son's voice, and his eyes fell upon the form beside him, he paused and gazed at them in bewildered surprise.

"Why, Azariah Moore, you'll catch yer death o' cold, 'thout no hat on!" cried Huldah, when the sleigh stopped before him. "What ever possessed ye?"

Grasping his son's hand in his own, Azariah smoothed his bare locks with the other, laughing a little constrainedly.

"That's so, wife, I must a-forgot it, I was in such a hurry. Ye see, Huldah, I come in to tell you that the calf had strayed back home; an then I went to the desk an' pulled out a drawer, and there was that consarned wallet down behind it. I called ye to tell ye, an' ye wa'n't nowhere to be found.. It was a-growin' so dark I got a little fretted 'bout ye, Huldah, an' so was a-lookin' out for ye."

The eyes of the two met, and Huldah smiled broadly to hide the tremble of her lips.

"Well, Azariah, everything 's all right, after all, so you jest squeeze in here, 'tween Joseph an' I, an' we'll be a-gettin' home afore ye get any more cold. An' we won't worry 'bout the mortgage, till to-morrow, anyway," said she.

“By the way, father,” said Joseph, as he tucked the buffalo robe round his father, and Huldah tied her handkerchief over his bare head with rather shaky fingers, “that mortgage is one of the things that I’ve come home to see to. Tom Jones has had a hold on the old place long enough, and I’m going to settle the whole of his account to-morrow. How will that do for a Christmas present, pa?”

Azariah Moore drew in a long breath of complete satisfaction, as he answered, a little huskily:

“You’re a good boy, Joseph, an’ you won’t be sorry for ’t.”

“That’s all right, pa. I happened to find out what you didn’t intend I should know, that you borrowed that money of Tom to start me in business when I left home. So I’m only paying my debts, after all,” said Joseph with a gay laugh, as he drove into the dooryard with a loud flourish of jingling bells.

TO THEE.

When life seems darkest to mine eyes,
And clouds o’ershadow all my skies,
When hope has fled mid sorrows drear,
And vanished joys seem doubly dear,
Ah! then thy face comes back to me,
And all my heart cries out to thee.

When burdens hard for me to bear
Weigh down my soul with bitter care,
When storms have swept my frail bark o’er,
And cruel rocks have crushed me sore,
Then shorn of pride from bondage free,
I turn with all my soul to thee.

For thou hast been of all the earth
The truest, and I know thy worth;
And though the miles between us lie,
And swift the years are speeding by,
Yet still through tears thy face I see,
And from all else I turn to thee.

THE RUMMAGE SALE AT PINEVILLE.

“What on airth have ye done with my old ulster, Alvira?” said Silas Holbrook, poking his head into the pantry where Alvira stood molding her bread. “I’ve looked high an’ low for’t an’ taint nowhere, es I can see.”

“Well, don’t look no more, then,” said his wife, without turning round.

“But what have ye done with ’t, anyway?” persisted Silas.

Alvira whirled round, a pan of bread in each hand, and Silas dodged quickly one side, to let her pass through the narrow door. Alvira had grown stout in the last few years, though Silas was still as little as a dried pepper. The oven door slammed before Alvira answered.

“I’ve given it to Lucinda Peters for the rummage sale,” said she, as she turned and faced him.

Silas’ underjaw dropped, and his faded blue eyes looked bewildered, as he sank down upon the empty woodbox.

“Gi’n it to Lucinda Peters fur the rummage sale. An’ what’s a rummage sàle, Alvira?” said he, in a hopeless tone.

“Lucinda says it’s the latest fad, the city folks has got up, to make money for church societies, relief corps an’ sich like. An’ the Pineville folks aint a-goin’ to be behind hand, so they ’re a going to have one, two, and, you see, everyone rummages through their attics fur all the old truck they’ve had hid up for the last 40 year, an’ brushes it up, an’ sends it to be sold. Then the poor people come in an’ buy it fur a little o’ nothin’, an’ the money goes to the church. When Lucinda called to see what I’d give, I was too busy to go rummagin’ in the attic, so I rummaged the woodshed, an’ found your old ulster. Now, Silas, you’ve had that old coat, I don’t know how many years, an’ you never wear it only when you go trampin’ in the woods, an’ I’m sick o’ seein’ it round, so I’m glad it’s gone,” answered Alvira briskly.

"An' I'm powerful sorry, Alvira," said Silas, dejectedly.

"Land sakes! Silas, you look as mournful as ef I'd given away ye're last cent!" said his wife, a little scornfully.

"Seem's almost es ef ye had, Alvira," answered Silas, hoisting himself down from the wood-box, and shuffling slowly out of the room to the shed.

With his hands thrust into his trousers pocket, Silas gazed disconsolately at the empty peg, where for so long a time had hung that shabby old ulster.

"Who'd ever dreamed that Alvira 'd gi'n that ere coat away!" muttered he. "She hain't teched it fur years, es I c'n remember, to sew a button on't nor nothin', an' I didn't suppose she ever would. I never'd a left them things in the pockets ef I'd thought Alvira 'd go nigh it! an' now the hull thing's gone." Silas sank down upon the chopping block and groaned aloud.

Silas groaned again as he opened the kitchen door and called loudly, "Alvira!"

"Well, Silas, what is it?" answered his wife.

"Where's Lucinda Peters' a-havin that air rummage sale ye're tellin' on?" asked Silas.

"In the back room o' Jake Wetherell's store down in Pineville. Jake said the women could have the use of it if they cleaned it up first."

"Huh! Jake knew what he was about that time, fur the place hain't been cleaned up since the year one," said Silas, as he closed the kitchen door.

A little later the sound of sleigh bells caused Alvira to look out the window.

"I swum! ef there ain't Silas a-drivin' off to the village without sayin' a word to me! An' I'd been a-thinkin' I'd go down myself. It's jest like the selfishness of man, anyhow. Lucinda says they air all tyrants, even the best on 'em."

Pineville was all excitement over the rummage sale in Jake Wetherell's store. Lucinda Peters had stirred up the farmers' wives to raisack their houses from cellar to garret, and the result was decidedly unique.

There were disabled flatirons, weak-backed chairs, and pitchers minus noses. There was the old-fashioned wooden bread trough, mounted on rockers that served as cradles in the long ago. Rickety spinning wheels, whose busy whirl had long been silent, stood beside broken lawn mowers, rakes without handles, and a two-legged milking stool. The parson's oldest silk hat, a Grand Army overcoat—and a pair of white kid slippers—were on a table with a cracked looking glass and a pair of rusty andirons.

Silas Holbrook walked into the store and glanced about him curiously.

“Looks like an auction of the town poor!” he muttered to himself, then as Lucinda Peters came toward him he asked eagerly:

“Have ye sold that old ulster o’ mine that Alvira gi’n ye, Mis’s Peters? Cause ef ye hain’t I’d jest as soon buy it back ’s not!”

“Why, Mr. Holbrook, that’s too bad, for I sold it only two hours ago,” answered Lucinda.

Silas’ hands trembled visibly, as he buttoned up his coat and pulled his cap down over his ears. “Who bought it, Mis’ Peters?” asked he, a little huskily.

“The man was a stranger to me, but someone said he came from Woodstock,” said Lucinda, eyeing him curiously. “Was you particularly attached to that coat, Mr. Holbrook?”

“W’ll, yes, I was a leetle sot on’t. Used to wear it when I went a trampin’, you know,” answered Silas, making an effort to smile as he turned away.

Once more in his sleigh, he drove slowly homeward, muttering dejectedly as he went:

“ ’Taint no use a trapesein’ over to Woodstock atter a man you don’t know who, an’ I don’t suppose I’ll ever see that coat, or what’s in the pockets agin. Land knows what I’m a-goin’ to do, nor what Alvira’ll do either, when she finds it out,” and the old man sighed heavily.

For a week or more, Silas went about looking so woe-begone and desolate, eating scarcely anything, and saying so little that Alvira began to grow alarmed.

"For the land's sake, Silas, what ever does ail ye?" she exclaimed one morning, as Silas sat curled over the fire, his head buried in his hands. "Ye ain't sick, be ye?"

"I guess that's jest what I be, Alvira, sort o' sick," said he without looking up.

"'Taint like es if ye was comin' down with anything, is it?" questioned his wife anxiously.

"Seems if I was, Alvira, an' I do wish that Ezra was to home." The last words were said in so mournful a tone that Alvira flushed as she answered quickly:

"If Ezra wasn't an ungrateful and selfish boy he'd be home now," said she.

"There, Alvira!" said Silas, lifting his head and looking at his wife a little sternly, "don't you go talkin' hard agin' Ezra. You know he'd never a-gone away ef ye hadn't a-been so sot agin' him an' Matilda a-gettin' fond o' one another."

"Matilda was too young to think o' gettin' married, Silas, an' you know it," said she hastily, avoiding his eye as she spoke. "She's better off a-learnin' the milliner's trade down to Boston than a-gettin' married at her age."

"Mebbe so, Alvira, mebbe so, though I allus thought she favored Ezra considerable, too," answered Silas, with a little sigh.

Ezra was Silas Holbrook's son by his first wife, and Matilda was the daughter of Alvira by a former husband. Their parents having married when the children where quite young, they had been happy playmates for several years.

But when Ezra was 21, and Matilda 18, they discovered that their affection for each other was stronger than that of brother and sister. When Alvira's eyes were opened to this fact she decided to end the matter then and there, and, with a mother's tact, she aroused the girl's ambition for new scenes.

Understanding his stepmother's motive in thus separating them, Ezra, like a young man in love, became sulky and moody,

until after several stormy scenes between them he, too, left his childhood's home. For a time Ezra had written his father frequent letters, but now there was a silence of many months, and the old man yearned silently for his only son.

The next day, Silas was too ill to leave his bed, and Alvira, leaving a neighbor to sit with him, drove down to Pineville for the doctor. As she entered the little village, she noticed an unusual stir and excitement, while groups of men were standing about talking earnestly.

Pausing before the village bank, she felt her heart leap to her throat, as she read the placard that was nailed upon the closed door:

SUSPENDED PAYMENT.

For a few moments Alvira gazed at the black letters, as though spellbound. Then gathering herself together, she drove swiftly to the doctor's, and, leaving her message, she turned her horse homeward. Forgetting in her excitement her husband's condition, Alvira burst into the house, exclaiming bitterly:

"There, Silas! it 's happened jest 's I said 'twould! The Pineville bank's failed up, an' every cent we've got in the world's gone to the dogs. If you'd only a-taken the money out, when I told ye to, we might a saved it!" moaned she, swaying to and fro with her face buried in her hands.

"That's jest what I did do, Alvira," answered Silas, feebly.

The woman's hands dropped to her lap as she gazed at him in surprise.

"You did, Silas!" she cried, "an' what have ye done with it, put it in the bank down to Woodstock?"

"That's what I was thinking o' doin', Alvira, an' then I lost it," said Silas, in a desperate tone.

Alvira's ruddy face grew pale with horror and amazement and she sprang to her feet.

"Lost it!" she almost screamed. "If you ain't the most shiftless man on the face of this earth, Silas Holbrook!" and she began to cry bitterly.

"I know I be, Alvira, an' I'd jest es lieve die es not," murmured the sick man, turning his face to the wall, with a long sigh.

For a few days it almost seemed as though Silas' despondent wish would be realized, but at last the fever went down and he began slowly to recover. In her husband's weak condition she dared not reproach him again for his carelessness, yet she struggled constantly with the bitter words that rose to her lips.

One day, in the midst of her anxious thoughts, she heard the sound of sleigh bells, that paused with a merry flourish before the door. Starting to her feet she was about to open it when, like a whirlwind, there flew into the room a young girl, rosy and smiling. Throwing her arms about Alvira's neck she exclaimed:

"O! mother! please don't scold us, but Ezra and I have gone and got married. You see Ezra's got a fine position down to Boston, and I got so tired trying to be a milliner, when I couldn't make a stylish bow to save my life, so Ezra thought I'd better give it up and get married. Now, mother, do say you forgive us, because if you don't, Ezra says he'll take me straight back to Boston tonight."

Alvira's face had grown pale with anger and disappointment, as she listened to her daughter's words, yet she kissed the girl fondly. Turning to the young man who had just walked into the room, she said reproachfully:

"Ezra Holbrook, how could you persuade Matilda to take such a step when you knew—"

"Yes, mother, I knew that you didn't like me, but—" began Ezra—

"As long as I did, mother, he couldn't do any different, you see. And really I don't think I needed so very much persuading, did I Ezra?"

Before Alvira could answer, they heard Silas' voice calling his son's name.

"Is father sick?" questioned Ezra, starting up.

“Yes, Ezra, an’ he wants to see ye powerful bad,” answered Alvira.

Ezra Holbrook wore a new and stylish overcoat, yet over his arm was flung a heavy ulster faded and worn. Walking into his father’s room, he threw it across a chair, saying as he shook hands with his father:

“There, father, you’ll never guess where I found your old ulster?”

As he heard these words, Silas rose up in his bed and held out his trembling hands eagerly.

“Gi’n it to me, Ezra, gi’n it to me!” he cried.

Ezra threw the old coat over the foot of the bed, and watched his father wonderingly as he thrust his hands eagerly into the pockets. A groan burst from his lips at their emptiness, then suddenly feeling through a slit in one pocket, he drew from between the linings a long flat package. With a sigh of utter relief, he fell back upon his pillow, the package clutched tightly in his hands:

“Alvira! Alvira! the money’s found!” he called loudly to his wife.

“Silas, if he only takes good care o’ Matilda, I won’t say no more agin the marriage,” said Alvira with a grim smile. “But for the land’s sake, do tell us how your father’s old ulster come into your hands, after I’d give it to Lucinda Peters for the rummage sale?”

“That’s the queerest part of it, mother,” said Ezra, with a laugh, “for I never dreamed that there was anything valuable in the pockets when I found it. I was sent by the firm I am working for, to transact a little business in Woodstock. While waiting for a car, I saw a man, who looked so familiar that I thought it must be father, wearing his old ulster. He went into a pawnbroker’s shop, and I watched for him to come out. Several men passed out as I watched, but no one wearing that old coat. Something, I don’t know what, prompted me to go inside. And there on the counter lay your old ulster.”

“It looked so homelike and familiar I couldn’t keep my eyes off of it, and the proprietor offered to sell it to me. I asked

him where he got it, and told him it had once belonged to my father. He said he had just bought it of Jim Burk, a notorious drunkard of the town."

"Of course, I didn't really want it, and yet it seemed impossible for me to leave it there, and I gave the man \$1 and took it. I supposed, of course, you had given it away, and that it would be a joke to bring it home again, and, by George! it has been, a rich one, worth \$1500 in cash!"

IN THY GOOD TIME.

In thy good time, O Lord, grant thou my prayer!

Forgive that in my pain my soul should dare
To doubt thy love or feel thy promise vain,
My human strength grow weak, my human courage wane.

In thy good time let this sufficient be,
Lest in my haste I drive thee far from me;
For surely thou dost know my every need,
Canst see my anguished heart in sorrow bleed.

In thy good time, e'en though I may not see
My hopes fulfilled till years have come to me,
Or till, perchance, my tired feet shall rest
On that glad shore, that haven of the blest.

In thy good time, oh, let my longings cease,
And fill my weary soul with reverent peace.
Let stronger faith with all my prayers be blent,
Teach me to trust, and, trusting, find content.

OBADIAH'S AUCTION.

It was a warm morning in early fall. Silas Holbrook hitched the old gray mare into the democrat wagon and drove slowly out of the barnyard. Pausing before the farmhouse, he shouted:

“Alvira! Alvira!”

“Well, Silas, what is it?” His wife opened the kitchen door with a jerk. “Anybody’d suppose the house was afire, the way you holler.”

“I jest wanted to say that I was a goin’ to the auction,” said Silas, meekly.

“What auction?” snapped Alvira, crossly. “Seems to me you are always a goin’ to some auction or other an bringin’ home useless trash to litter up the house. As ef we hadn’t got old truck enough of our own without payin’ good money to store some other folkses.”

“ ’Taint likely I’ll bring home much this time, Alvira, but I’m anxious to find out what Obadiah’s a goin’ to do atter it’s all over.”

“So, it’s the old Wood place, is it?” asked Alvira.

“Yes. The taxes have jest about eat up the whole place, an’ the town’s took it. Obadiah hain’t heard a word from Luther for more’n a year. They writ all over creation the time his wife died, six months ago, but all the letters came back. Obadiah thinks he’s dead, but I have an idee he’ll turn up yet.”

“Well, I hain’t no such idea, an’ I don’t believe he’s dead, either,” said Alvira, scornfully. “Luther Wood was always a wild, good-for-nothin’ fellow, an’ when he rushed off to the gold mines an’ deserted his wife an’ year-old baby I made up my mind it was the last we’d ever see o’ him, an’ I hain’t had no cause to change it either.”

Twenty years before there was no more prosperous former for miles around than this same Obadiah Wood. Then the clouds of misfortune gathered about him, and the storms of adversity swept nearly all of his earthly possessions.

The death of his wife, the loss of poorly invested money, the breaking down of his own health, and the consequent neglect of his farm work, followed one upon the other in swift succession.

The marriage of his only son, Luther, to a frail, delicate girl, wholly unsuited to the duties of a farmer's wife, was an added burden.

Ambitious and restless, with no taste for farm life, Luther Wood was an easy victim to the gold fever. Dazzled by its golden visions, he joined a party of enthusiasts and departed for the Eldorado of his dreams.

For a time his hopeful letters cheered and comforted the lonely household, but suddenly these ceased, and the weeks and months passed by with no tidings of the traveler.

Then it was that the invisible power which had upheld Selina Wood through so many trials gave way, and the tired little wife folded her hands over her broken heart and went to her deep sleep.

And now powerless to keep a roof over his own and little grandchild's head any longer, Obadiah Wood waited with bitter resignation the action of the town upon his property.

A large crowd had gathered when Silas Holbrook arrived at the old Wood place, and teams of every description stood about the dooryard. Through the open door of the farmhouse a babble of voices was heard. Silas pushed his way in among the speakers.

"Where's Obadiah?" he asked of a group of curious people who were handling with impunity the sacred relics of this old New England family.

"Ain't seen a thing o' him nor the little gal this mornin'," said Jake Wetherell, who, with paper and pencil in hand, was taking an inventory of household goods preparatory to the sale.

"Say, Silas," continued he, lowering his voice, "there ain't nothin' left for them two but the poorhouse, an' the selectmen are a goin' to take 'em up there soon's the auction's over."

"Not so long as I have a home to ask 'em to," exclaimed Silas, indignantly.

Shrinking from seeing his household treasures despoiled by the crowd, Obadiah had taken his little granddaughter, Jeannette, and led her into the apple orchard, and there, seated on the low stone wall, with the child in his arms, Silas found him.

Lifting his eyes to the face of his friend he said, in a trembling voice: "Seems mighty hard to let the old place go, Silas."

"So it does, Obadiah—so it does," answered Silas, his own voice husky with suppressed feeling. "But don't you gin up yet, Obadiah. Luther will be a comin' home soon an' he'll straighten things out in no time, an' until he does you an' little Jeanette air a goin' home long o' me to stay."

"No, Silas, I couldn't think o' bein' a burden on ye. If it wa'n't fur Jeannette here I wouldn't mind so much, but the poorhouse ain't no place fur a delicate little critter like her."

"'Tain't no place fur either on ye," exclaimed Silas, impatiently, "an' ye won't go there ef I can help it, Obadiah."

The afternoon shadows were lengthening when Silas Holbrook, with Obadiah and Jeannette, drove homeward. Crushed by his misfortunes, Obadiah had yielded to Silas' persuasions, though his heart misgave him as he climbed tremblingly into the wagon.

As they rode along, a feeling of uneasiness crept over Silas at the thought of what Alvira would say on their arrival. Hiding it as best he could, he drove on with a brave front.

As he neared the house, its silent, deserted appearance struck him with a sense of foreboding. No lights were visible and every blind was closed and fastened over the windows.

"Alvira! Alvira! Where be ye?" he called loudly, but no one answered.

Suddenly glancing up, he saw his wife's face as she peeped from an attic window, then disappeared. Picking up a small

stone, he tossed it lightly against the window pane. Getting no response, he threw a larger one with greater force, and a sound of broken glass followed its flight. Up went the attic window and Alvira's angry face glared down on the astonished man.

"Fur the land sakes, Alvira, what be you a doin' up there?" he cried. "Come down an' let us in. I've brung Obadiah and Jeannette home with me."

"Silas Holbrook, that man and young one can't come into this house. I tell you I won't have 'em'" Alvira answered angrily.

"Then there ain't no place fur 'em but the poorhouse, Alvira," said Silas sadly.

"That ain't no fault of mine, and I won't be bothered with 'em; that's settled," snapped Alvira, and down came the window with a bang.

For a moment Silas stood as if rooted to the spot, his upturned face gazing blankly at the closed window. The scraping noise of the wagon wheels aroused him, as he hastened to the front of the house as Obadiah turned the horse toward the road.

"I heard every word Alvira said, Silas, an' I don't blame her a mite," he said, "an' if you'll drive us over to the poorhouse, I'm ready to go."

Without a word Silas climbed into the wagon, careful not to waken Jeannette, who had fallen asleep as she crouched in the bottom of the wagon, her head against her grandfather's knee.

Silently they rode out into the gathering twilight, and no word was spoken during the three-mile ride to the town farm. A little later, when the two homeless ones were comfortably sheltered, and the kind-hearted matron had gathered the little motherless Jeannette into her arms, Silas Holbrook once more turned the mare homeward.

Tender-hearted and slow to anger was Silas Holbrook, yet once let the spark be kindled, it blazed with fierce wrath. And

now a feeling of hot resentment against Alvira burned within him. Bitterly he thought of her cruel selfishness, and his own heart hardened against her.

"I've a good mind not to go home at all," he muttered aloud.

As he spoke a low rumble of thunder, followed by a flash of lightning, startled him. The mare shied, then sprang forward into the darkness. Another peal; a blinding flash; the wagon wheel struck a stone and Silas felt himself thrown violently to the ground. Then he knew no more.

To Alvira Holbrook the night was a memorable one. As the night advanced and Silas did not return Alvira grew a little anxious, through her stubborn will would not yield itself in the wrong.

At sunrise she arose, and as she looked forth upon the beautiful morning her eyes fell upon the old gray mare, still hitched to the democrat wagon, standing quietly in the doorway. For a moment she gazed in dull surprise, then stepping out she glanced around for her husband, saying impatiently:

"Well, Silas Holbrook, if you haven't given me a pretty scare, a-stayin' out till this time."

Her words seemed to die away into the silence that followed, while the mare took a step forward and looked at her with big, reproachful eyes.

She harnessed the mare into the buggy and started out in search of her husband. Driving toward the poorhouse, where she intended to make inquiries, she met the village doctor.

"Good morning, Mrs. Holbrook," said he, drawing in his horse as they met. "I was about calling to see you to relieve your mind in regard to your husband. He has met with an accident. His horse got frightened at the storm last night, threw him from the wagon and ran away. One of the farm hands at the poorhouse found him insensible by the roadside and carried him to the house. His leg was broken and he was badly bruised."

"They sent for me and I have set his leg and he is doing as well as can be expected."

"I want to see Silas!" she said, stepping briskly up to the door of the poorhouse a few minutes later. "Dr. Brown said he was here with a broken leg."

Martha Thompson, the matron, blocked the doorway with her portly figure, and looked at Alvira with stern eyes.

"Well, Mrs. Holbrook, ye can't see him ef he is!" she said coolly.

"I'd jest like to know why?" snapped Alvira, angrily.

"'Cause the first thing that Si Holbrook said when he came to his senses was this:

" 'It's all Alvira's fault, every mite on't, an' I ain't a goin' home no more. If the poor house is good enough for Obadiah Wood, it's good enough for me, an' here I'm going to stay. An' if Alvira comes after me don't you let her in, Martha.'"

During the days that followed, Alvira had plenty of time for reflection. She drove daily over to the poorhouse only to be met with the same refusal from Silas and the same stubborn firmness from Martha Thompson.

Day by day the old farmhouse grew more and more desolate and lonely without its master. Night after night she sat by her lonely fireside and gazed with gloomy eyes at the vacant chair opposite. Longer and longer grew the dark night hours, when, sleepless, she tossed upon her pillow and thought of the past.

Of the long years that she and Silas had lived together in happiness and content, of his patient loving kindness and tender ways, of her own quick temper, sharp tongue and lack of self-control.

Bitter, indeed, were her reflections. Remorse, regret and shame filled her soul with torture. What could she do to atone? How prevail upon Silas to forgive her and return to his home? At last her resolve was taken.

Six long weeks had passed, and Silas had recovered as far as to hobble about on crutches, when one bright morning he saw Alvira drive into the dooryard. From his chamber window he watched her unseen, and, in spite of himself, a wistful look crept into his eyes.

“ ’Tain’t right a livin’ this way. ’Tain’t right, an’ I know it,” he muttered sadly.

Meanwhile, Alvira had hitched the mare and was looking about the big grassy lawn, as if in search of some one. Presently she spied Obadiah Wood’s white head and the red dress of little Jeannette, as they wandered hand in hand. Hastening toward them, she said quickly:

“Obadiah Wood, do you want to be the means of separatin’ man an’ wife?”

The old man looked at her sorrowfully.

“No, Alvira, I don’t,” he answered sadly, “an’ I’m mighty sorry that Silas took sides with me agin’ you.”

“He was right, Obadiah, an’ I was wrong,” said Alvira eagerly. “I’m willin’ to own it now, an’ if you an’ Jeannette will come home with me an’ stay till Luther comes, I’ll be very glad.”

“ ’Taint likely Luther’ll come, Alvira, and I hate to be a burden to ye,” he said.

Alvira held out one hand, while with the other she drew the little girl into her arms.

“Obadiah, can’t you forgive an old woman’s hasty temper?” she cried, her eyes filling and her voice trembling. “We have a-plenty, more than a-plenty, an’ from my heart you are welcome. And may the Lord do to me even as I do to this little one.”

She bent and kissed the little girl, who smiled and nestled closer to her side. Obadiah clasped the hand held out to him, saying gratefully:

“Thank you, Alvira. I’ll come.”

With these words they turned toward the house, and as they did they saw Silas standing in the doorway, a smile on his wrinkled face.

“Ye ain’t a goin’ to leave me behind, Alvira, be ye?” said he, limping toward them, “ ’cause I was gettin’ sort o’ home-sick, an’ I was wonderin’ ef you didn’t feel a mite lonesome yourself?”

It is the unexpected that always happens, and so it was only

a few short weeks after Obadiah Wood and his grandchild were settled in their new home that Luther Wood returned broken in health, prematurely gray, old before his time, but rich beyond his wildest dreams.

To buy back the old homestead and to restore a few of its scattered treasures he could do, and when he came to take his father and little daughter back to their home he said to Silas:

“Mr. Holbrook, I can never thank you enough for your kindness to my father in his hour of need. It is something that gold can never repay.”

“Don’t mention it, Luther!” said Silas with a warm clasp of the hand. “It wan’t no more’n I ought to have done. But speakin’ about yere gold, ye’ll find there air a few things ye can’t buy with it, an’ things, if you had, ye wouldn’t barter for grist on’t. Alvira an’ I have been a-findin’ out on ’em. Ain’t that so, Alvira?”

LIFT UP THINE EYES.

Lift up thine eyes, my darling,
Lift up thine eyes and pray
That He who guides the starling
Through its most devious way,
Will keep our souls from straying
Aside from truth and right,
Ah! never cease thy praying
For wisdom, faith and light.

Lift up thine eyes, and seeking
To do God’s gracious will,
His every precept keeping,
His blessed laws fulfill,
Though life seems just a-groping,
With weary, tear-blind eyes.
Do not despair, but hoping,
Still watch for brighter skies.

A BABY'S SHOE.

The ladies of St. Mark were holding a rummage sale. Beautiful women, high bred and dainty, stood behind the counters and handled their wares with the deftness of their more humble sisters. The accumulation of cast-off articles, which clutter the attics of every household, was spread upon the counters and shelves. Crowds of people, from the lowest to the highest grade of society, thronged the store, elbowing each other rudely. At the further end of the long store was a table piled high with children's clothing of every description. "Your Choice for 25 Cents!" was the motto upon the card, hung conspicuously above the table. Almost hidden beneath the pile was a little heap of baby shoes and stockings, and among them a tiny pair of blue kid shoes. They were a bit faded and worn, with faint creases at heel and toe where the chubby foot had pressed its weight against a mother's knee. The soft white hand of the saleslady (*pro tem.*) seemed to linger caressingly upon this particular pair, as she sorted over the clothing for each new customer.

There were round-faced Irish mothers, with their frowsy-headed offsprings clinging to their skirts, yellow-haired Swedes, whose wondering blue eyes took in every detail of the crowded table; and dark-browed Italian women carrying their babies within the shawls that were their only covering. Bernice Colby served them all graciously and sweetly, yet, as each turned away, her eye glanced with relief at the tiny blue shoes, still unclaimed.

"How foolish I am!" she whispered to herself. "Why cannot I give them up?"

With a sudden impulse she held them out as a broad-faced Irish woman, with a child in her arms, stood beside the table.

"Och! mem, but them's foine, indade," said the woman with a gay laugh. "But Jamey's fut never'd squaze into the loiks o' them."

A scarlet wave swept Bernice's cheek as she dropped the little shoes, and hastily sought among the clothing for something more suitable for the sturdy "Jamey." Far back in the store, partly hidden by the crowd, a man stood watching Bernice's table. It was a dark, handsome face, yet showing the marks of dissipation. As he witnessed the little scene a sneer surled his lips.

"Heartless and cold! Willing to sell her dead baby's shoes," he muttered.

Hastily pushing forward, the man approached the table. His upturned coat collar and the soft felt hat, pulled down over his brows, nearly concealed his face, yet as he brushed past the eyes of the two met. For a second the woman's heart seemed to stand still within her bosom, as she recognized the man's face; then he passed by and was gone.

That night, as Bernice was being driven to her own luxurious home, she leaned back amidst the soft cushions with a weary sigh. Not because of the unusual exertions of the day was she spent and weary, but the sight of that dark, gloomy face, that for five long years she had longed, yet dreaded, to see, had completely unnerved her. With the door of the past thus opened, the waves of memory submerged her. Five years before, Bernice Colby had been a happy wife and mother. Then the dark angel had snatched from her arms their precious burden. Selfishly yielding to the grief that overwhelmed her, she had neglected her wifely duties, until her husband had sought more cheerful company and consolation in the wine cup. Suddenly awakened to his intemperate habits, repugnance and disgust, for the time, swept love from her heart, and heedless of his repentance and remorse, she drove him from her with stinging words of bitter scorn.

She sent him from her to do battle alone with that dreadful demon that lies in wait for the souls of the weak and the unwary. Upheld by the praise of false friends, she deemed herself wise in thrusting from her so vile a thing, yet in the long and lonely years that followed the voice of conscience spoke loudly in her ear. It said that she herself was, in a

measure, responsible for her husband's downfall. That, had she been stronger, braver, her love and faith, her prayers and purity of living would have saved him. Alas! she had not stood the test! And so, though lacking naught that riches can buy, Bernice Colby was a childless mother and a wife in name only.

The rummage sale was still in progress, and the next day Bernice stood behind her table, smiling and gracious, though her bright face hid an aching heart. In turning over the garments upon her table she missed one of the tiny blue shoes, and with a faint smile she took its mate and thrust it quickly within the bosom of her dress.

As the day sped onward, a heavy storm arose, the most severe of the season. A whirlwind of snowflakes blinded her eyes as she left the store, and hid from her view her own carriage, as it stood among the long line of waiting coaches.

Turning in the wrong direction, she stumbled into the arms of a man standing upon the curbstone. Starting back, she glanced up into his face, and their eyes met.

"Ned!"

"Bernice!" they both exclaimed in a breath. "Let me see you to your carriage?" said the man, and without a word Bernice placed her hand within his arm. With the touch of those light fingers, Ned Colby's heart throbbed with the love of other days, and words of tenderness trembled upon his lips. Placing her within the carriage, he was about to turn away, yet her hand still clung to his arm as she said earnestly:

"Oh! Ned! are you not coming, too?"

"May I, Bernice?" questioned he eagerly.

"Come!" answered his wife, drawing him in beside her with both hands.

"Home, John," cried Ned to the wondering coachman, and the door closed upon them.

Something beside the whirling snow dimmed the old servant's eyes at the sound of that ringing voice.

"Thank God! it's the master!" he muttered as he gathered up his lines.

“Bernice, like the prodigal son, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy—”

“Hush, Ned!” whispered Bernice, covering his lips with her hand: “I have done wrong, too. Let us forget the past and begin our lives anew.”

As she leaned towards him, there fell from the folds of her dress a tiny blue kid shoe. Holding it up, Bernice whispered softly:

“The baby’s shoe.”

Thrusting his hand into his coat pocket, Ned drew out its mate, and crushing them both together in the little hand that held them, he bent and kissed his wife tenderly.

“Our baby’s shoe!” said he with a smile.

WELL DONE.

When blessed night excludes the day
And darkness hides the sun,
How many weary souls can say,
“This day my work’s well done;”

And lying down in peace to sleep,
Can feel the sweet content,
That comes when we have done our best,
And the day has been well spent;

Can look back o’er each word and deed,
And count them all as right,
To find not one we feel the need
Of hiding from the light.

Then let us try to do our best,
So that in future years,
We’ll feel that we have earned a rest
With no regretful tears.

THE GREATER HERO.

A Memorial Day Story.

It was Memorial Day. That day set apart by a grateful country, to perpetuate the memory of its heroic dead. The day in which loyal hearts made loving tribute to our "Boys in Blue." In thousands of households, this day woke anew sad memories of the past, and widowed wives and bereaved children felt again the "good-bye" kiss, and the touch of a vanished hand. To Rachel Montigue this day was particularly sacred. Not that her sorrow was deeper, or her bereavement greater than that borne by other lonely hearts, but in her eyes, and the eyes of the world at large, her husband, Colonel Montigue was one of the greatest heroes of the Civil War. Faithful indeed had been the service he had rendered his country in her hour of need.

Leaving a home of luxury, a prosperous business, and a beautiful young wife, he had been one of the first to volunteer, and not until the last great victory was sounded, did he leave his post. Then, wounded and broken, he had been brought home to breathe his last with the face of his beloved one bending over him. In an expensive lot, in a handsome cemetery, he slept the eternal sleep, while above him towered a stately monument, on which were carved his deeds of valor, a tribute from loving hearts. In the years that had sped, Rachel Montigue had kept green the memory of her young husband, and none other had been found worthy to take his place. Each Memorial day, the choicest blossoms from the greenhouse she placed with lavish hand before that marble shaft. Today her heart is filled with sad, but tender memories, as she rolls along in her luxurious carriage, through the beautiful cemetery drives. Her arms laden with fragrant blooms, she steps to the ground, the coachman drives slowly away, and Rachel Mon-

tigue is alone with her dead. With dainty fingers she arranges the flowers in the handsome urns made for them. Suddenly a low moan startled her, and turning, she saw an old negress, bent and wrinkled, sink wearily down upon the curbing.

"Don't look lac as if I'd trabble dis ere road many more times, Honey," said she, glancing at Rachel with a patient smile.

"Why do you come?" answered Rachel, with careless curiosity. The old woman's eyes flashed her a look of reproach.

"I spects I done come Honey, fur de same reason what you does. To put posies on de ole man's grabe," said she, pointing with shaking finger at the flower strewn sod.

Rachel smiled as she answered softly, "Of course you do, Mamma. I meant no offence, but was your 'ole man' killed in the war?"

"Reckon he was, Honey, an jest es if 'twant bad enough to be killed, there comes along a shell an' blows de body all to pieces, so dere want not'in to tote home to his ole 'oman, but the ole blue cap an' canteen."

"How dreadful?" exclaimed Rachel in a shocked tone. "But you spoke of his grave."

"Ob course, Honey, he's got a grabe!" answered the old woman earnestly, "but dere ain't not'in in it sabe dat ole blue cap an' canteen. You see, Honey, when dey fust told me 'bout poor Pete, I was jest nacherly crazy, for we'd only been married a year, an' had one lil piccannie. Then Pete's cap'en came an' brung me de ole blue cap an' de canteen, an' he said as how Pete was one of the bravest soldiers in de regiment, an' dat just afore he was killed he'd sabed de life ob one ob de biggest Colonels in de Army. Den I sorter got puffed up with pride, an' it done helped me bear de trouble, but the years hab been mighty lonesome 'thought my ole man," and the woman sighed wearily.

"Can you remember the Colonel's name?" asked Rachel, much interested.

"Reckon I can, Honey, 'taint lack I'd forget dat name," said she proudly, "It was Colonel Ralph Montigue, Honey."

For a moment Rachel could not speak, and the hot tears rushed to her eyes. Then pointing to the monument, she said softly,

“Shall I read you what is written there, Mamma?”

“Yes, Honey,” answered the old woman, her wondering eyes fixed on the beautiful marble.

“Sacred to the memory of
Colonel Ralph Montigue—”

“For de Lawd’s sake, Honey, am dis Massa Montigue’s grabe? An’ be you Missis Montigue?” cried the negress, rising to her feet and holding out both hands to Rachel.

“It surely is, Mamma,” answered Rachel, clasping in her own the outstretched hands, and the tears of the white woman and the tears of the black woman were mingled in a common sorrow.

Wheels grated upon the gravel walk, and Rachel beckoning to the astonished coachman, led the old negress to the waiting carriage.

“Come, Mamma, let us go to Pete’s grave,” said she, as she seated her among the soft cushions.

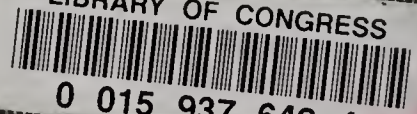
Then she gathered together the lovely blossoms, leaving behind only the bunch of faded lilacs, dropped from the old woman’s hand. In a ragged lot, in a far corner of that large cemetery, was a grass ground mound, marked only by a wooden cross. Here Rachel heaped the wealth of flowers she had brought for her own dear one, smiling through her tears at the old woman’s exclamations of delight. A few weeks later there stood, in place of that humble cross, a handsome marble slab, on which was inscribed:

“Sacred to the memory of
Peter Johnson,

A brave soldier in the war of the Rebellion, who was killed in
the act of saving the life of a superior officer.”

“Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.”

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